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THE CITY
LIES FOUR-SQUARE

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A NOVEL

BY

EDITH PARGETER



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■

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FOR
G.

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*Vere Jerusalem est illa civitas
Cuius pax iugis et summa iucunditas;
Ubi non praevenit rem desiderium,
Nec desiderio minus est praemium.*

*And if I have done well, and as fitting the story, it
is that which I have desired; but if slenderly and
meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.*

II MACCABEES

PATRICK MUNDY, HIS BOOK

BEYOND St. Julian's Church the quiet street narrowed, as if it had attained its objective, and could rest content. The length of it which lay between Queen Street and the far end of the bright-green railings was new, well-laid in a smooth white arc, with paved paths; but beyond it shrank together under old, tottering houses, and was presently lost in a maze of gullets and lanes and crofts, threading the rabbit-warren of Churchside.

Margaret had passed the smart shop-windows of the Square and Queen Street without a glance, but she was not proof against the first rows of books outside the first curio-shop. The twisted taper legs of the stand which held them, the dappled colours of their bindings, the mildewed leather of old volumes, the brazen colours of the very few new ones, the half-obliterated gold lettering on their spines, the musty scent they had, all these were an irresistible fascination to her. She stopped so promptly that the pluck of her hand on Julian's arm sent his pencil tumbling into the gutter. When he recovered it, he found the point broken, deep within the wood.

"There, look at that! My notes are finished for this evening; I haven't a pen-knife."

Margaret's fingers were hopping from spine to spine along the row of books, underlining each title as they passed, tilting a volume from its place where the spine was blank, their every touch a caress. The feel of velvety

old leather, faintly furred with damp, was to those hands more delightful than the texture of the finest silk in the world. It made her forget all less satisfactory things.

"Never mind!" she said absently. "Don't let's view any more houses to-day."

"Getting discouraged?" asked Julian, himself thankful to thrust the broken pencil and the list of addresses into his pocket together, and forget them for the moment in the joy of watching her engrossed face.

"Just a little. That horrible mausoleum by the park! You hated it, too, didn't you? We don't want marble halls; they're too cold and unfriendly; and rather frightening. And that new little house with all modern inconveniences was almost as bad, wasn't it? Lots of hall space for show and plenty of rooms, but such tiny rooms. Why, they wouldn't hold a quarter of our books." She had reached the end of the topmost tier of the stand without discovering any treasure, and in order to reach the lower ones she sat on her heels like a child. Julian watched her, and said nothing. The dignity and the candour of Margaret ran through all her acts like a double cord threading a necklet of pearls; so that he, who knew more of her than anyone else in the world could know, was for ever wondering at the simplicity with which she stamped her own steadfast individuality upon every slightest thing she did.

So he was thinking when she turned her chin upon her shoulder to smile at him. Her balance wavered for a second, and she dropped the finger-tips of one ungloved hand into the dust to steady herself. Her gloves, which she seldom wore, were in Julian's pocket, with the list of houses in which they would never live.

"Are we very hard to please, I wonder? It seems so difficult to find what we want, and yet I don't think I'm

setting out to be awkward. I'd be perfectly happy in any one of those cottages across the road there." She shrugged resignedly and went back to her books. "Oh, well, we've plenty of time. I can't leave Mrs. Cator for at least six months yet. She won't be sailing until November, at any rate, and I shouldn't like to leave her stranded for so short a time."

"Of course not, and I shouldn't ask you to. We'll hunt our house again next week. If it weren't for the difficulty of storing my things, I wouldn't hurry the choice so much; but, you see, Harrington is finding room for all my books, and cabinets and things, for nothing. I don't care to let him do it any longer than's necessary."

Margaret made no reply; but with a forefinger suddenly eager and expert she tilted upright a small, limp brown book, and plucked it out of the ranks of its peers, to spread it open upon her left hand. She stood up slowly, turning the pages.

"Oh, Julian!"

"What have you found?" he asked, coming to her shoulder.

Margaret turned the book in her hands for him to see. The cover was of dark brown suède, without any kind of title or design, only the lighter discs her finger-tips had made scattered like rain-drops over its soft texture. Within they saw the reason; for the yellow pages carried not print, but lines of minute and firmly-formed script in an ink turned muddy-brown by time. It was not easy to distinguish words; but when their eyes grew more accustomed to the Lilliputian lettering and the slope of the hand, they saw that there was beauty in it, in the passionate care with which the words had been framed, in the impetus with which the fingers and the mind had flown. On the inner side of the front cover was written,

in an elaborated hand, as if vanity had demanded some ceremonial in ownership :

Patrick Mundy His Book. 1831.

The leaves fluttered under Margaret's fingers, and the grouping of lines assumed form and proportion, shaped sonnets, triolets, and more passionate verses which could not hem their meaning into any mould so limited.

"A commonplace book a hundred years old," said Margaret. "What a find!"

"But is it? Every page is in the same hand, and I don't see any indication of contexts." Julian put a hand over her shoulder and turned on and on until he had reached the end. "It's all I—I—I. It's one man's work, surely. Patrick Mundy, his book."

Margaret said, with sudden enthusiasm: "Julian, it's poetry."

"Yes, I see it is."

"No, but I mean it really is poetry. Listen to it." She read, with the simplicity of a child reciting, in her soft, uncertainly pitched voice, which shifted its key, in speech or song, whenever she was deeply stirred :

*Against the dark sky, star-inlaid,
Your body seems
A chaced Damascus blade
Drawn in dreams;
And your smile gleams
Across the hills of shade,
A star which cannot fade.*

*These are my themes;
These, and the hand's rare
Pilgrimage to my sleeve,
The whiteness of it there,
The pain when it must leave,
The smooth, moon-silken, purple-shadowed
hair——*

She looked up, half-smiling. "I like that. I don't know if it's clever, or anything, but I like it. She must have been very beautiful."

The hypothetical "she" could not, in Julian's eyes, have been half so beautiful as was plain Margaret, standing in the sunlight of Churchside with her whole face alight, one beneficent smile from widow's peak to square chin, in the pleasure of visualising someone else's dead and gone loveliness. He took her elbow and drew her towards the shop.

"Come on and buy it, and then you can explore it at leisure. You'll want something to pass the time going back." His hand was already rattling coins in his pocket.

"I'm paying," said Margaret, "because it was my find."

"No, you're not. This is where I have to put my hand in my pocket. It's time I went into training," said Julian, with a smile, "for the married state."

They went into the shop. Inside the doorway there was a little gate, which gave to their first touch, and rang, by some mysterious connection of wires, a bell at the far end of the shop. It was very dark after the sunshine of the street, so that the suits of armour ranged along one wall had a ghostly appearance. Even when their eyes became accustomed to the gloom, there was an eerie fascination about those poised figures in their set attitudes,

as if they might at any moment join battle with the disturbers of their centuries-old peace. There were pictures and bric-à-brac of all kinds hung over the wall opposite; weird old maps of the world, adorned with portraits of some of its oddest denizens, like so many pages of Hakluyt sprung to life; sporting prints of no very ancient design; oleographs of pretty, buxom women, after Sir Joshua Reynolds; social cartoons of the seventeen and eighteen hundreds, crowded with figures almost obscene in their ebullience of flesh; declamatory documents of Victorian crises like the Crimean War and the Manchester riots; later drawing-room pictures of the romantic children-roses-and-lovers school; a few pipe-racks of black wood, elaborately carved; a few bracket-clocks, ticking away like so many death-watch beetles out of shadows which almost concealed them; a Dresden plate in a wire frame; a broken fan. Only here and there could they see a few square inches of dun-coloured wall between these decorations.

The counter and the floor enjoyed the same patch-work existence. They wound their way to the counter along a narrow and intricate path between cabinets full of china and crude shelves full of books; and a little middle-aged man, with gold-rimmed spectacles worn like a bandeau across his thick grey hair, came through a rear door to meet them.

Margaret proffered her treasure. He gave it one swift, impartial glance, and said simply: "Threepence."

Margaret laughed; she could not help it; but her laughter was sufficiently infectious to raise a smile in the eyes long blunted by contemplation of the old and mirthless. He was not, by his face, the right man to find romance in worn leather bindings, or the breath of life in signatures a century old.

"I don't think poor Patrick Mundy would be flattered," smiled Margaret. "It's manuscript, you know, and a hundred and six years old. Why, it may be worth hundreds of pounds."

"Pigs may fly, miss," agreed the curio-seller dryly, "but they make very unlikely birds." He scooped in the three pennies Julian placed upon the counter and swept them into the till with fingers as thin and yellow as slips of old vellum. "No, there's nothing in him. He never published anything. A matter of sentimental interest to a local person, maybe, but that's all."

"Local?" said Margaret. "Why, did he belong round here?"

"I take it he must have done. I got him in a mixed bundle last month, when the books from that old empty house in Eden Close were sold by auction. The pick of them went privately; we got only the miscellaneous rubbish the collectors didn't want." The old man's voice had warmed to the recollection; the injury still rankled.

Julian had turned away, and was examining a mail corselet which hung upon a nail like a discarded mackintosh; but the magic words "empty house" penetrated his idle speculations on old battles in an instant, and brought him back to the counter with pricked ears.

"Empty? An empty house? Where is that?"

"Eden Close is the name of the place. The house has been empty for years—as long as I can remember, in fact. It used to be the vicarage of Old St. Julian's, I believe, and the church and the house went out of use together before I was born. It's had one or two tenants, but none of them stayed long. It's a good enough house, mind you, but the neighbourhood—that's the trouble. The present owner lives abroad. He cleared the entire library last month, and I'm hoping the furniture will follow.

They say there are some fine old pieces in that place."

Margaret and Julian looked at each other with eyes suddenly alert and shining. The fever of house-hunting reasserted itself so easily that the book which had pointed them into this promising way was at once forgotten.

"Well, I've been exploring Charleworth for a year," said Julian, "but Eden Close is one place I've never found. How do we get there?"

"You'll know Julian's Alley? Take the left-hand passage out of it, the turning immediately beyond the 'Red Harry', and you come out into the Close. The house is on your left again, half-timbered seventeenth-century work; dates back to James I, I believe, and some of the fittings are older still. Not that we've any lack of old material in Charleworth."

"All the same, we'd like to see it," said Julian warmly. "We're obliged to you. Good afternoon!"

He followed Margaret from the shop into the sunlight, and by one consent they turned along the green railings of the church, walking happily and hopefully, with linked arms.

"Dating back to James I, and half-timbered, and full of antiques," said Margaret, "and this book came out of it. Now why should a place like that be empty?"

"I can't imagine. Not everyone would want to live in Churchside, of course. It was probably a fashionable suburb in Caroline days, but it's the poorest quarter of the town now; and people who can afford beautiful old houses don't want them buried in the slums."

"That's a good reason why they may be pleased to let it quite cheaply," argued Margaret, determined to turn everything to hope.

"That's what I'm trying to believe. But, of course, we may be on a wild-goose chase, you know. It may be miles

beyond our reach, or it may be nothing like what we're looking for. We mustn't be too optimistic."

They came to the end of the well-laid length of street and stepped on to cobbles; and between two rows of Tudor cottages, which leaned balcony to balcony in a serrated edge of brown against the sky, Julian's Alley rolled away down-hill. There were two wheel-tracks laid out centuries ago in smooth stone, and hollowed by the weight of Tudor and Stuart and Georgian coaches until they were ruts two inches deep. They were still the most comfortable walking the alley afforded, for the cobbles were round and treacherous, and little worn from their original shining newness.

"Julian's Alley—— Old St. Julian's—— New St. Julian's," said Margaret. "Churchside is haunted by your name, isn't it? A most appropriate place for you to live."

Julian looked over his shoulder at the church which was new only by contrast with its predecessor and its illustrious neighbours. New St. Julian's had been in existence just about a hundred years now, which made it a mere infant among Charleworth buildings. It was not a thing of beauty, being neo-classical among the town's smoke-blackened oak and weathered yellow plaster; but there were yew-trees in the churchyard, and against their dark foliage the white stone of the walls had a piercing cleanliness. Julian had personal ideas on beauty, and they were not all concerned with the chastity of form and design, nor all conventional in the standard they set up. He had seen buildings of immaculate purity in pattern which were much less beautiful than New St. Julian's.

Margaret walked with her face lifted to look at the slip of white sky showing between the gables. Window-boxes at the upper casements dangled geraniums over her

head; and whether she looked at the left-hand row or the right, Julian's Alley was like an old woman in what one poet had called a "daggyd hood" of rich umber.

They turned a corner. An old man sitting on a doorstep nodded to them as they passed. They saw it, in one of the little squares of back-yard, three little blue frocks bobbing upon a line, dwindling in length like three neighbour reeds of Pan's pipes. A young girl on a bicycle pursued and passed them with an imperious ring of her bell, keeping the wheel-rut like a trick-rider, all down the alley and out of sight.

"This is a wonderful, beautiful city," said Margaret with conviction.

"Yes, I think so. It has its commonplace side and its drab side and its tragic side, like any other place; but it has so much more compensation than most towns. I'm glad you love it, too. I've been in love with it for a year—yes, from the day I began to practise here; and I've studied it with all my heart, and still I know nothing about it. And here," he said, nodding at the sign which swung over the lane, "is the 'Red Harry'; so we turn here for Eden Close."

Red Harry, a silhouette head of Henry VIII in faded scarlet, creaked over their heads; and then they were between enclosing walls, walking in a brief passage so narrow that their shoulders almost brushed the brick-work on either side.

Sunlight broke before them. There was a sound of shrill voices, and a tennis-ball shot into the passage just in front of them, and rebounded into Julian's chest. He caught it out of sheer surprise, with a laugh and a gasp.

"We're ambushed! I didn't bargain for personal assault. Maybe Eden Close doesn't like the look of us."

They emerged into an oval space much larger than they had expected to find behind those crowded cottages, with a plot of much-abused turf in the centre. Seven little boys, representing between them, by what involved distribution of persons only themselves knew, two teams complete with umpires and scorers, turned shining, hungry eyes upon the ball which Julian was gently tossing up and down in his hand. Their wickets were two neat obelisks of brick, erected cross-wise in workman-like fashion. Their bat—they had only one—was genuine willow, lamentably frayed at edges and end, but still sound; a discard from some kindly local club. They were, in fact, a well-equipped company, if one overlooked the inadequacy of the tennis-ball.

“Oh, Julian,” said Margaret breathlessly, “Julian——”

But it was not at the cricketers she had exclaimed, though their slightly apprehensive, slightly impudent, trusting eyes, glistening like those of a dog who sees a bone proffered and withheld, followed the ball in Julian’s hand up and down, up and down. Margaret had turned to the left, had taken a few steps forward from Julian’s side, and was staring at her house.

II

PROVIDENCE COTTAGE, EDEN CLOSE

FIVE of the famous “shuts” which honeycombed Charleworth from end to end met in Eden Close, like streams pouring themselves into an inland sea; but they were highways only for the few who dwelt in those fastnesses of beauty, poverty and content, so that their whole traffic could not disturb the tranquillity. It was no conscious hush which hung over the circling houses and

the trodden green; the quiet it had was the bland quiet of sunlight and soil, as widely open to the world as was the clear sky over it. There were sounds in plenty, but sound there was none, nothing between grey wall and grey wall with any power to trouble the sunlit sleep of Eden.

The house stood square and neat among its tottering neighbours, half-retreating from the open ground, with skirts of orchard and garden spread round it. What had once been a formal lawn terraced down to left and right was now a meadow of lush grass, with splay footprints of dandelion and prayer-mats of lady's-slipper scattered over it, while the orchard was one great cushion of olive-green above and emerald-green below, with scarcely a glimpse of the trunks and branches which bore that extravagance of leaf. Among this billowing confusion of green, of feathery nettles and tall barley-grass, of thistle heads as broad as tea-cups and renegade cabbage-roses no larger than walnuts, a gravel path encircled the frontage of the house itself.

There were two storeys, and attics above the second. There were windows of tiny diamond panes, which leaned many ways in their leaden settings, so that some were dark while others shone, and the pattern of their shade and shine changed, with the scintillation of frost, at every slightest change in the angle from which they were viewed. For a house of such age they were unusually large; and the two which lay close on either side the porch had insets of colour at eye-level on each perpendicular panel. These they noticed first, as living and lively things among the lovely, lonely death of the walls. For this was an eager and a hungry house, starved of humanity for almost a hundred years.

The black of the timber in the walls had weathered

to chocolate-brown, and the white to ivory. The pattern in which they divided the fabric was small and intricate; and the porch was a black trellis, laced with leaves and scrolls. Here and there a leaf or tendril was broken out of the delicate tracery; but apart from that the house appeared to be in perfect repair, even to the last tiny pane of glass.

"But it's perfect," said Margaret slowly. "I always knew there must be one somewhere."

Julian found himself casting about for drawbacks. He was not, as a rule, superstitious about his good fortune; but this seemed too lovely to be true. If Margaret should expect too much of that exquisite exterior, and be later disappointed in the treatment it meted out to her, then it should not be his fault.

"Of course," he said, in a voice which tried to be critical and succeeded only in being eager, "it can't be quite as idyllic as it looks. No house could. There's probably no electricity, and I don't suppose there's a bathroom. They didn't go in for them in James I's day."

"We could have one put in," said Margaret.

"And those diamond windows, while I admit they're very picturesque, must be the dickens to clean."

"I don't care," said Margaret stoutly, "and I don't see why you should."

"I want you to be altogether happy, that's all."

"So I shall be, in this house. Look," she said, pointing, "it's all right, the board's still there."

The board was still there, certainly, but so grown over and round by the budding privet of the hedge-top that it appeared to belong to the past rather than to the present, to be a museum-piece of old business attached to this museum-piece of old housing. It had long ago despaired of effecting a sale. They could make out, by shape but

not by colour, letters from which the paint had long since weathered away.

FOR SALE

or

TO LET

They stood together, within touch of the lame gate, and stared at their home.

The nearest and boldest small boy came to Julian's elbow unnoticed, dragging his feet slowly through the grass, and trailing the frayed bat after him by one hand. They did not hear his approach, though he advertised it in every way of which he could think. They had, indeed, no attention for anything but the old empty house which had been there for years, and at which, as far as he could remember, no one had ever stared so before. He thought them odd people; and besides, the man still had their tennis-ball in his hand.

"Eh, mister," he ventured in a dubious voice.

They did not hear.

"Julian," said Margaret, "I want it so!"

Julian wanted it, too. He wanted it more than he had ever wanted anything, with the sole exception of Margaret, who had flowed into him with the simplicity of stream meeting stream. He said nothing, but closed his hand over Margaret's, where it had flown to his arm in the confiding of her rapture.

"Eh, mister," protested the patient boy, on a higher note, "can we have our ball?"

"Hullo!" said Julian, starting, the fragile bubble of his isolation with Margaret pricked and gone. He looked down, and saw a lean, wiry brown boy of about eleven, all erect reddish hair and bony joints, with a liberal dust-

ing of freckles over his face. "Oh, hullo!" he said, smiling, "are you the sportsman who hit the six?"

"Yes," said the child gruffly, and drew breath to repeat his request for the ball; but before he could frame the first word it was tossed into his hand, and Julian's eyes had returned to the house.

The cricketers, watching as silently and inquisitively as little wild animals, gathered themselves up from the grass, dusted their hands, and drew into position for a renewal of the game; but their champion, intensely curious about so intense a curiosity, lingered, dangling the bat behind him, and staring.

He said at last, kindly: "It's no use you going there. Nobody lives there."

"No," said Julian, "we weren't supposing they did. What's the name of it? Do you know?"

"Of course I know!" scoffed the boy, "it's called Providence Cottage."

"Providence Cottage," said Margaret to herself. "Providence Cottage, Eden Close." The name was delicious on her tongue. "Oh, Julian, how do we get into it? Where do we go? Someone here must have the keys, if the owners are abroad. I want to see if it's as perfect inside as out."

The boy said eagerly, delighted to find himself legitimately drawn into the affair which so much intrigued him: "Are you going to buy the Cottage? Me mother's got the keys. Our house is only just down this shut; I'll run and tell her."

He ran, and presently returned at the same pace, bright-eyed and insatiably curious, his mother walking sedately behind him.

She crossed the grass with a man's even stride, a woman of perhaps forty, and tall. She was of the women

who can and do look agreeable without looking happy. She did not smile at sight of them, but her manner was pleasant, and her voice, when she spoke, soft and low-pitched. Nor was she altogether the woman they had expected to see. She could cover herself with the shabby dress of a labourer's wife, the gaily-coloured overall, the sacking apron, the hands and wrists aged with washing, the hair faded and sapped by the dry heat of ovens and the wet heat of steam; but she could not conceal a fineness which she herself had never perceived. It was in the intensely large and lambent eyes, the long, heavy lids which hooded them, the full and shapely mouth. Even the black and white colouring of her had more in common with the ivory and jet of Providence Cottage, than with the squat brown brick house from which she had come.

"You're wanting to see over the old place," she said slowly, her dark eyes wandering from Julian to Margaret, and back again. "Jo told me, but I couldn't hardly believe it. It's two years since anybody was here."

"We've been wondering," said Julian, smiling, "why it isn't occupied. Such a beautiful old house ought to attract a purchaser very easily, I should have thought. Why, the first rich American who set eyes on it would surely want it. Unless, of course, all the drawbacks are inside; and even if they are, it could be modernised."

"Oh, it has been," said the woman indifferently. "It's got all the conveniences you could wish for, a bathroom, a hot-water system all complete, electric light—and the kitchen's a proper picture. It was made over a couple of years back, when Mrs. Chatten bought it. She was one that wanted everything just so. But you'll be wanting to see for yourselves."

She moved before them through the lame gate which had to be lifted tenderly from its place to let them pass.

In single file they followed into the spongy silence of the grass, and crossed towards the porch. The boy Jo, walking hard on Julian's heels, was dismissed instantly. "You run off and play cricket," said his mother, "we don't want you."

"Mrs. Chatten is the present owner, then, I suppose?" said Julian as they reached the two stone steps of the porch.

"That's it. American, she is. She wanted it the minute she saw it. Went off and bought it, just like that! Had it made over, she did, from attic to cellar, with electric light and goodness knows what."

"Then why did she leave it?"

The key, which was poised in her hand, fumbled at the lock and fell ringing upon the step. She turned and looked at them, with her fingers flattened against the black door of the porch, her eyes gleaming under the too-heavy lids.

"She got tired of it, I suppose. All I know is, she came to me with the keys and said: 'Mrs. Grace, will you look after Providence? I've bought a villa in Florence, and I'm going there next week.' I asked her when she was coming back, and she said never. But she was like that. She wanted things with all her might, but none of them for long. So the house has been for sale ever since, and I've shown a few people over it, but nobody's bought. It's too far out of town for most of them. They say it's in the slums. She gave me the keys because I'm right on the spot, living practically next door; I used to do her washing while she was here."

Her voice, which had raised its pitch and quickened its pace at the beginning of this explanation, sank and slowed gradually as she saw how casually they listened. None of the doings, none of the domiciles of Mrs.

Chatten had any interest for these two. The house could be left to speak for itself without fear of interruption.

They were standing ankle-deep in the lush grass, their shoulders touching, while Julian's finger traced out, not without difficulty, a text in faded gilt which ran upward beside the porch, on one of the trellised scrolls.

"Peace be within thy walls," read Julian, and on impulse crossed to the other side of the doorway to find the continuation. "Yes, it's here! '—and plenteousness within thy palaces.'"

The hall, from which Mrs. Grace looked back for them patiently, was full of both peace and plenteousness. Standing in the doorway, with their shadows paving the floor before them, they knew that they had never, even in the moment of their own meeting, been in the presence of such completion.

The room was long. It ran through the house from front to back, where the stairs rose, and a door gave to the unkempt garden. The walls were panelled in oak, yet the effect was not of darkness, for the sunlight was falling full through the two big windows, in a double pattern of gold, and purple, and green, over the leather cushions of window-seats, and the black polished floor, and the golden mohair rugs. Three purple irises flowered along the shining floor to left of them, and three to right, like spilt amethysts against the shadow. Beyond, the hall narrowed, so that the luminous flowers lit two large alcoves; and in each was a patently modern but very beautiful book-table, and of each the walls were lined with shelves practically empty. From where they stood they could see other treasures in the unexplored regions beyond the light, an oak chest covered with bunches of grapes, a grandfather clock taller than a tall man, a monk's bench as old as the tables were new, a fireplace

carved from floor to ceiling in a panel six feet wide, with little fauns and satyrs playing round it.

"How," asked Margaret, in a long sigh of pleasure, "could she bear to leave it?"

"Oh, she liked old things because she thought she ought to, that's all. She was rich, she could afford to throw this down the drain." Mrs. Grace shrugged shoulders just beginning to change from slenderness to angularity. "She didn't like the boys, either. They were always knocking the ball into the garden, or swinging on the gate, or doing something to annoy her. She was easy annoyed."

Julian looked round slowly, and it seemed to him that they had walked into a room only recently vacated by some other person, so intensely did it appear inhabited. If there had been some more personal indications, an ash-tray or a bowl of flowers upon the book-tables, the sound of the clock which had been dumb for two years, he would have believed that someone had just risen from the window-seat, and passed through the little rear door into the garden.

"It's as if," he said aloud, "someone had just left the very spot where we're standing."

"Everything's just as Mrs. Chatten left it," said Mrs. Grace, "if that's what you mean. Her agents pay me to keep the house in trim, because she's always hoping to sell it. I come in regularly, and keep things to rights. Of course, all the small stuff's packed away, and I've got dust-sheets over most of the things in the other rooms; but I like this to look as if someone lives here; it makes it more homely coming in."

Julian said: "Somehow, I don't think I meant Mrs. Chatten."

"Perhaps," said Margaret, "it was the woman with the 'moon-silken, purple-shadowed hair!'"

"Or Patrick Mundy himself, who knows?"

The kitchen and scullery lay to the right of the hall, and certainly there was no presence from the past anywhere in them, for the furnishings were new, even to the white window-frames and red quarried floors. To the left, shrouded in dust-sheets, which Mrs. Grace flicked up one by one over her arm, was the dining-room, all darkest oak, more richly brown than the shells of roasted chestnuts, with Jacobean chairs and sideboard, and a massive refectory table older than the house by probably three or four centuries. Beyond that again was a small lounge decorated in blue and grey, with lilac trees outside the windows.

"That's all new, that is," said Mrs. Grace. "There isn't very much that's really old: the clock, and the dining-room table, and the chairs and sideboard, and the hall seat, and that chest with grapes on, and one or two more things; but a lot of the rest Mrs. Chatten brought in."

"And who owned the place before she bought it?" asked Julian.

"Sir Charles Camber, but he'd never even been near, never mind having anything done for it, until the Americans started coming to Charleworth. Then he kept it in better repair on the chance he'd catch somebody with it; and so he did, at that. It had been in his family for hundreds of years. They had the gift of the living of old St. Julian's, and this was the vicarage. But I dare say you know that."

They mounted the stairs, which climbed in a square formation, with a dark shaft in the centre. The banisters and the treads were alike, black and slippery-smooth with age, while the centre-front of each stair was hollowed more than an inch deep by feet which had been dust before ever the three people who climbed now were born.

On the first landing Margaret halted, standing in the lane of light which a narrow window made.

"It feels eerie, doesn't it, to be treading in the footsteps of so many people. One can't help wondering about them, whether they were happy, what they were thinking, what became of them. Wouldn't it be nice to know? Perhaps the lady with the moon-silken hair really did run up and down these very stairs. Perhaps, if we could only know, she rested her hand just where mine is now. Perhaps her poor poet stood here with her, just as you are standing close to me."

Mrs. Grace had climbed the second flight of the stairs and disappeared into one of the bedrooms. A momentary silence and loneliness descended upon them, and they were still, only the light dappling over them to the movement of the lilacs outside.

"Who knows?" said Julian. "Perhaps they don't really die. Perhaps your poet is treading on our heels now."

Margaret laughed. They went on, and into the bedrooms. There were five, and a bathroom, upon the first floor, and sky-lit attics above them, where trays of mellowing apples and pears had once been laid, and where the scent of them still lingered, as if every joist and plank had become saturated with sweetness.

From the back bedroom on the right they could see Old St. Julian's. Until then they had not realised that it was so near, but here the sun lit it for them from the instant they entered, every line of it, to the jagged broken edges of stone where the tower had fallen, flung into sharp relief. Viewed from the doorway, it kept the centre of the large square window like a camera-study; and when Julian opened the two panels of diamonds they saw that it was very near.

There was little left of what had once been the largest

collegiate foundation in the county. One chancel aisle, the north, and even that partly in ruins, kept in remembrance the glories of a massive cruciform Norman church. Its fallen stones, such as remained of them, were a litter of grey in the grass, many of them grown over with lady's-slippers and convolvulus to the semblance of little flowering graves among the graves. Two or three ash-trees, brilliantly green, grew in the broken end of the shell which remained standing; and the churchyard, round and among its tottering memorials, blossomed with an almost unbelievable richness in red, and white, and yellow clover, in sorrel, and scabious, and centaury, and self-heal, as if the gentle dead gave up in them such thoughts as fell a little short of heaven.

Margaret put down Patrick Mundy's book upon a table, turned her back upon a Charles I four-poster carved over every inch of its surface from canopy to feet, and leaned out from the window. Julian stared with her, but neither of them said a word. There was no need to confide their pleasure in a scene which revealed death as a thing so beautiful, and so gently accomplished.

"This was her bedroom," said Mrs. Grace, behind them. "It's the biggest, and the bed's a real good piece; and she liked to think she was looking out on a real Saxon-Norman ruin. They've got none in her country, of course. She liked this writing-desk, too, though it isn't anything like as old as she thought it was. It is pretty, though, I will say."

Julian and Margaret turned to look at it, and saw a little delicate escritoire of highly-polished ebony, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, a lady's toy of, perhaps, George IV's reign. It was too flimsy and frivolous to be entirely appropriate in the same room with that gorgeous four-poster, yet there was an intimate fascination about it which

over-rode its slightrness of form; and it had, when all was said, a miniature and feminine beauty of its own.

"I think it's lovely," said Margaret, laying her fingers upon its sloping surface, and lifting the fragile rings of filigree which served as handles for its drawers. "Who knows, perhaps the lady with the moon-silken hair wrote her love-letters to her poet at this same desk. I think she must have done. Such a precious, impractical thing must have belonged to a very lovely and pampered lady." She dropped her hands suddenly, and looked at Julián with a sigh. "What a pity all these things, these charming things, are out of our reach. The whole house is perfect; but we can't possibly afford it."

"Don't you believe it," said Mrs. Grace promptly. "She won't be asking much for it; she's nearly ready to give it away. I shouldn't be surprised if you could buy the place, lock, stock and barrel, for a few hundred pounds."

"But it's worth thousands," cried Julian, "it must be."

"Not so much as you think. Not all these old things are worth much. And besides, what does she care? She's got millions."

Julian and Margaret looked at each other, and the united longing of their eyes accepted and echoed Mrs. Grace's optimism, for they wanted the house as they had never wanted anything in the world until that day.

"You'd better see the mess the garden's in, while you're about it," said Mrs. Grace practically, and led the way from the room.

They let her go. There was nothing strange in the mutual impulse which held them where they stood, close together, with every instinct of life and enjoyment of life quickening in them as they looked at each other. Nor was it inappropriate that they should turn to meet in the window, and kiss above the prospect of Old St. Julian's,

as if their living love reached its zenith only in the presence of that prodigy of death.

Over Margaret's shoulder Julian saw, without unduly noticing, the book of poems lying open upon the table. He did not remember that either of them had opened it. For so old a book the paper had kept its spring remarkably well, for some natural tension turned a page slowly, slowly as he watched; and after it a second rose, hesitant, an inch or so from its place, almost as if an invisible finger lifted and held it poised.

III

MARGARET IN THE ORCHARD

JULIAN SEARS bought Providence Cottage. From the moment that he saw it the issue was beyond doubt. The wants of Julian were few, but in their depths of desire they knew no limit; and for all his practical good sense he could never, when a book, or a picture, or a piece of furniture had fastened the hands of its love upon him, keep a coin in his pocket or an ounce of energy in his body which could help him to purchase it.

Providence Cottage was such a book, and such a picture, and such a piece of furniture, all in one; and the Ossa of Margaret's enthusiasm, piled on the Pelion of his own, made the possession of it a matter of necessity. He could, of course, have rented it, but that would have been no more satisfying than borrowing a book he wished to own. So he bought it. He did not, however, tell Margaret how much he had paid for it. It had cost him more than the few hundred pounds Mrs. Grace had hopefully prophesied; more, indeed, than he

possessed. But his credit was good, and to borrow two or three hundred was not a matter of great difficulty. So presently his few personal possessions, the bureau his mother had given to him, the candle-sticks, the Chinese cabinet and the painted fire-screen which he had salvaged from the sale of his distant home, because he associated them with her, the little fantastic clock which he had won in some holiday competition at his first school, and the many and strange books—all these were removed gradually from the house of his friend Harrington, and installed in their new home.

There was little work to be done upon the house itself. The arrangement and re-arrangement of such old and lovely things in such old and lovely rooms was a task after Margaret's own heart; and whenever she was free for an afternoon and evening, which was seldom oftener than once a week, she would come to assist at the re-shaping of Providence Cottage to her own desire.

The garden, when they had leisure to examine it, presented a much greater problem, and the prospect of much harder work. Every tree and every hedge had made its own miniature jungle of straggling, clinging shoots; and the ground was a dense undergrowth of nettles and grasses, and gold, grey-leaved charlock, and orange-beaked, purple-hooded nightshade. The task of re-ordering such a wilderness was at first sight a baffling one; but they tackled it in cheerful, if unscientific fashion, the rotten gate first, then the bristling privet hedges which no longer concealed a paintless notice-board, then the choked fruit-trees, then the waste of grass.

After his partner's surgery and his patients' air-less rooms, Julian found this kinder and more strenuous toil very much to his liking. To Margaret it was no less pleasing; but sometimes, with the best will in the world,

she could not choose but grow tired. Her days were full of a hundred silly errands and needless anxieties, for Mrs. Cator, though kind, was not considerate.

Julian liked best the evenings when Margaret was tired; for then she would make herself a nest with his coat among the boles of the trees, close to the spot where he was working; and sometimes she would talk to him about the future; and sometimes she would bring a book and read to him, in her low-pitched, uncertain voice; and sometimes she would let her head slip back against the trunk of the tree, and fall asleep so softly that he could not discover among a hundred slow, mellow moments the instant when the world left her. But always, whether she slept or waked, or spoke or was silent, he could turn his head whenever he chose, and see her sitting there; and always she was Margaret, beyond imitation.

To him the most extraordinary thing about this Margaret Godber was that most people found her ordinary. Her conventional beauties began and ended with the small, slim hands which turned the pages of Patrick Mundy's book; but her fascinations began with the close brown cap of her hair, and ended only with the toes of her long, narrow feet. She was big, and amply made, and cared very little how she looked, with the result that she always looked natural, and usually happy. Her hair was neither straight nor wavy, but a heavy helmet shaped to her head, springing away from the centre of her forehead in the flared wings of a Mary Stuart bonnet. Its colour was odd, and yet ordinary, a nondescript light brown with honey-coloured strands in it over the temples, so that sometimes, when she faced the sloping sun, Margaret wore a coronet of gold. Her eyes, too, were brown, under heavy level brows; and her mouth, too long

for beauty, had a lopsided smile which came at the least expected moments, and vividly. She laughed and cried readily, but in her own time, and often at what pompous people thought the least appropriate moments. And she had never, during the three years that Julian had known her, paid convention the compliment of either doing, or deliberately refraining from doing, things merely because they were expected of her. That was an obscure virtue, but a rare one, and one for which Julian loved her most of all. It made her what she was, Margaret and no other.

She sat so, with her back against an apple-tree, and her hands kneading the turf, on the evening that Julian moved into Providence Cottage. Her eyes were on the patch-work of leaf and sky overhead; a stem of grass was in the corner of her mouth, and the book of Patrick Mundy lay open on her lap.

"Virgil would have loved you," said Julian.

He was in the tree, legs dangling, a grey suède shoe almost within touch of her hand. A litter of twigs and small branches covered the grass underneath him, and a few dead leaves, curled round the chrysalids of butterflies, riddled by caterpillars, patterned with the neat semi-circles left by leaf-cutter bees, were shaken now and then from their anchorage by the slight storm his movements made, and drifted down to lie in the folds of Margaret's blue dress.

She smiled, the feathery end of grass dancing between her teeth. "I'm not really bucolic. It's the lazy side of it all that appeals to me, the sun, and the air, and the scent of it, and just to sit here and watch you pruning the trees of Arcadia."

"I'm not so sure," said Julian, "that this is Arcadia. You may be Rosalind and Celia rolled in one, and this may be a forest, but it isn't the Forest of Arden." He rested

for a moment, turning his chin upon his shoulder to glimpse the gables of his house through the tangled trees. It was near sunset, and the panes of the bedroom windows were scarlet and amber, like a scintillating draught-board; or even more, he thought, like scores of burning eyes, staring out steadily and stilly upon the churchyard of Old St. Julian's, beyond the orchard. Unbelievably patient, Providence Cottage looked for its dead, in whom he had no part. Sometimes, in the moments when most the love of it possessed him, Julian wondered if it did not hate him for an interloper, if its heart were not fast-closed against him, then and for ever. This most of all in the evenings, when the stillness came upon the Close, the stillness which even the din of dance-music from many loud-speakers, and the distant hum of traffic from the shopping streets, and the shrill quarrelling of Jo and his friends over their games, could do nothing to break. He wondered, then, if Providence Cottage had not frightened away the American woman by shutting her out of its soul, by making her feel the alien she was. But that was dangerous ground; for was not he as much a stranger as she had been?

Julian was often fanciful, but never for long. He had never, fortunately, had time to indulge the complexities of his nature; and for him the procession of the dead of Providence Cottage could fade in an instant into the wilderness of branches he had yet to remove from the apple-tree. It faded now, and he went on with his work; but his convictions about the house remained. It was not Arcadian; it was human, and uncompromisingly realist.

Margaret said, with a regretful sigh: "I must go soon, or I shall miss the train."

She sat up, and turned a page of the little book.

"Poor Patrick Mundy! I'm afraid he wasn't very happy."

"You haven't been reading him," said Julian, laughing.

"You've only to open him wherever you like. I don't know what was wrong. Perhaps he wanted the moon. Perhaps she didn't love him enough. Perhaps, poor girl, she didn't know he wanted her to love him. I imagine a sort of more solid Shelley, without the breadth of sympathy or the instability of heart. I think he had no confidants, and wanted none; and yet that doesn't explain him. Listen!—and this is quite a happy moment—

*In the dim shadows of the lilacs' bliss
Trembles your hair,
And passing sweet your body is,
Pausing peerless there,
And passing fair;
A vessel of full-fashioned ecstasies
And blessings rich and rare,
Having no care
Of any world but this.*

*Within that crystal cup
All my delights
Are poured and swallowed up;
My moonless velvet nights,
My noons of pain,
All I have loved,
All I have striven to gain,
All creeds I have believed,
Into your chalice are received.*

And this—much later:

*If I should die, she would not ask for me,
She would not know me missing from her side;
Nor, being told, shed for old sympathy
One tear to break the frost of which I died.
So little valued living, and being gone,
So little missed, who lived for her alone—
How can I live upon such meagre store?
How dare I die, to see her face no more?"*

She looked up, slowly, flattening the book against her breast. Her lips were parted in a wondering, puzzled smile, but there were tears, the inexplicable tears of Margaret, in her eyes.

"No, I don't pretend to be able to explain him. You must read him; you'll understand him better than anyone."

She rose, and Julian let himself down from the tree, and they went up through the wild orchard together. He wondered, as they went, if any power of memory in that house would store the one fallen tree thenceforward among its treasures, if anyone would speak and dream of it long after they were dead. He wondered, in another of his moments of indulgence, if the fiery hungering eyes of Providence Cottage would not, some day, be watching for a Margaret who would not come back.

"I envy you to-night," said Margaret. "I envy you that room, and the bed, and the view from the window when you wake. I think one should sleep very sweetly in this house."

Julian walked to the station with her; and a slow train carried her back to the aggrieved helplessness of Mrs. Cator, while he walked back through the dusk to darkening Eden Close.

IV

JULIAN AT PROVIDENCE COTTAGE

NOW that Julian was alone in the house, and the door of the big bedroom was shut, and the lights were on, Providence Cottage, or the one representative corner of it which contained him, was much like any other old house. The bed, the little dainty escritoire, and the dressing-table with its great mirror were there to keep before him the vision of a past in which he had no share; but the room had assumed, too, an expression of himself, whether with or against its will. His brushes littered the dressing-table, his fantastic clock stood upon the tallboy in the corner, and his own intimate book-shelf, the favourites he liked to handle and open whenever the mood took him, were arranged on a bedside-table, with a reading-lamp beside them.

They were a motley collection, those books. Julian would have pitied anyone who faced the task of deducing his character from them. For what could anyone make of a book-shelf whereon the twelve books of the *Æneid* were flanked on one side by *Call Mr. Fortune*, and on the other by *Stalky and Co.*? Where Cicero's letters rubbed shoulders with *Messer Marco Polo*, and *Pearl* with *Atalanta in Calydon*, and *Urn Burial* with *De Imitatione Christi*? He ran his fingers over them affectionately. Even in the dark he could have distinguished them, so individual were they, and so individually his friends. Beside the limp leather Thomas à Kempis was a copy of *News from Nowhere*, with Julian's own notes inside. He had laughed at it for a "tragical-comical-historical-pastoral" Utopia, but he had coveted it. Next to it, in one volume were the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, much thumbed at the story of Savitri; de Quincey's *Opium*

Eater; the Mabinogion; the *Pilgrim's Progress*; Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*; a couple of Father Brown books; a Shakespeare; Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung* cheek by jowl with a complete Matthew Arnold; the emotional chastity of Wordsworth hobnobbing with some of the most tormented and fleshly-spiritual of Swinburne. An odd collection. Many people had been baffled by it. But it made this stranger room in this stranger house Julian's home.

He put out the light and went to the wide open window, and leaned upon his hands in the frame. With dusk the wind had risen, and now the night was possessed with the sound of its tremulous passage through the trees. He could see the three ash-saplings in the husk of Old St. Julian's threshing uneasily, as if the will was in them to tear themselves away from the broken cavern their leaves concealed. There was a moon, riding high and full, fitfully brilliant and blind in the rush of long streamers of cloud; and in the moments of its triumph the raw edges of Old St. Julian's stood out startlingly white from the abyss of shadow.

The ruined church by moonlight was another place, no longer gentle nor human in its beauty, but distant, alien to the living world, and yet of itself and its own will terribly alive. He felt the stirring under the soil of the dead who were not content to die, who struggled to shape the darkness to the semblance of their bodies lost, to tune the wind to their long-silent voices, to thrust their thoughts into the warm haven of his own living mind.

After a hot and still day the night was stormy, with a rim of angry saffron round the horizon. The wind surged into the open window strong and cold, lifted his hair, flattened the collar of his pyjama jacket against his throat. Behind and before him, in the empty, sounding, unquiet

night and in the still room, he felt the air pulsing wave upon wave.

Julian lingered at the window, leaning on his wrists. He was quite happy, quite at ease in the uneasy night. He had never, even in his childhood, been nervous of the things which were expected to disturb the average small boy. He had never understood, until he was too deep in the excitement of adolescence to care, that darkness and loneliness had the stuff of horror in them, that strange places could terrify, or unfamiliar beds forbid sleep. Aunts and uncles, carrying him away on visits, had reported in astonishment the ease with which the stodgy child had dropped into new surroundings. No, the things which had frightened Julian had been—and he was half ashamed of it—robustly normal things like rough games of football, vicious bowling by his seniors at the nets, over-officious prefects, sturdy middle-school boys who disapproved heartily of his person, his curls and his studious habits, and had means of expressing their disapproval. A Julian, who had changed only by growth could yet afford to smile ruefully upon the bookish little Julian of those days. He supposed he had needed kicking.

But to be in darkness and alone—no, that had never been a penance. He remembered being locked in a cellar all night, and discovered by his disgusted captors next morning comfortably asleep, with a burnt-out candle and Virgil Book X beside him. No, he could no more be afraid of these intangible terrors than of falling asleep; which, after all, was only to be in darkness and alone.

A chair creaked, sharply and briefly. The sound cut his mood, and he started round in the frame of the window so wildly that he all but stunned himself against the lintel. The blow surprised him into swearing aloud, and fervently. By the time the pressure of his cold hands had

restored some feeling to his aching head, the creak of the chair was gone from his hearing and his mind; and yet he was trembling. He stood against the wall, and stared round the dark room, and every nerve in him seemed shaking. He thought: "What's the matter with me? I'm getting jumpy over nothing." A bromide and bed, that was the treatment for such a lapse as this.

Nor did he try to analyse, nor could he have elucidated for himself or anyone else, the reasons of his unaccustomed nervousness. Whether the slight sound had really in itself alarmed him, or whether it had simply torn his reminiscent trance to pieces like a spanner thrown into delicate machinery, he did not know. The only distress he felt was in feeling distress. But because his instinct, if not his reason, demanded reassurance, he switched on the light for a moment before he got into bed.

Rich and bland, the room put on its colour and form in an instant. All was as it had been, and as he had known it would be. He was sorry, now, that he had yielded to the impulse. Of the row of books one—it was *Pearl*—leaned drunkenly a little from its place. He put it straight with a mechanical gesture, switched out the light, and got into bed.

Usually he slept at once, with the aplomb of a machine turned off; but now he felt curiously wide awake, with a cold, alert clarity of mind which was seldom his even in the business of the day. He lay upon his back, with his arm doubled under his head, staring into the inverted bowl of darkness which covered him, and listening to the small, sad sound of the wind in the lilacs under his wall, and the wilder complaint of the threshing orchard. Staring and listening, with senses strung taut, like an over-tuned violin, while the hooks which held the windows open strained and rattled gently to be free, and the dark-

ness of the canopy above him changed from dull black to crimson in the constancy of his gaze.

He heard the chimes of New St. Julian's, faintly through the wind, strike twelve. A second time something stirred, close to the bed; but he was ready for it now, and did not start. In the night's silence there were always sounds, sounds to be heard, sounds to be imagined, sounds to be almost induced by the straining of the ears after them. The day had been hot, and the night was cold; and why should not the bedside table protest as it contracted to the change? No, Julian was not to be caught off-balance twice. He closed his eyes, and rolled over with his forehead on his arm.

But he could not sleep. Tossing and turning, he heard one o'clock chimed, and two. It was almost frightening in itself, this wakefulness! for he had yawned his way upstairs already half-asleep with fresh air and strenuous labour, comfortably tired, ready to leave the world the moment his head touched the pillow; and here he lay, still weary, but with his mind like a diamond in him, hard and brilliant, and full of brittle sparks of light.

The moon hid. The darkness grew solid, tangible, over him, filling the room. The window was only a greyish blur in the black. Then the wind dropped from its assault upon the barriers of cloud, and there fell a silence.

And in the silence, low and sudden, and piercingly clear, a voice said: "Julian!"

Then everything was still, and all the identity which was Julian shrivelled in the stillness.

He stopped breathing, lay in a suffocating horror, clenched together in an agony of tensed muscles, while all his flesh grew cold. He knew what fear was like, as a stabbed man knows pain, in one stroke of enlightenment. Fear was horrible. It took him by the pit of the

stomach, and tore the courage out of him, until he was a husk of manhood without power to move, or speak, or think, or feel anything but terror.

His mind, running round and round blindly in a dark pit, tried frantically to convince him that his senses were liars, that he had heard nothing, or nothing more than the imaginary sounds night and loneliness offered him by the dozen. Somewhere in him the ghost of himself cursed him for a miserable coward, tried to raise him from the bed, tried to drive his hand to the switch of the light, to kindle him to anything sane and active. He lay rigid, sweating, icy cold. He had heard the voice call him; that was all he knew.

"Julian!" it said again, insistent. The sound was close above his face, as if someone bent over him. If he reached up his hand he would touch the mouth which spoke.

His trance broke. He lifted his arm, and clutched the empty, silent, innocent darkness. He sprang up in the great bed, and turned on the light, and saw between the window and the four shining panels of wall nothing strange, nothing of human or inhuman life, only his own face in the mirror, chalky white round its dilated eyes, like a painted Egyptian death-mask. He sat waiting, painfully alert, panting, as if he had run a long way. He was quite alone.

But he was not alone, and he knew it. Something shared the room with him. While he sat there in the flooding light it spoke again.

"Julian!"

Light could not exorcise it, then. If only its utterance had been some inhuman sound which he could disbelieve, in the comfortable way of flesh; but not this repetition of his own name, deliberate and distinct and beyond forgetting. That was more than he could bear.

"Julian!"

He put his hands over his face, and cried out desperately: "But deliver us from evil——"

Silence closed on him. He felt it as a veil flung round his body. He waited, and it did not die. Then he was very tired, and the crystal wakefulness was slipping away from him. He lay down, and sighed again.

"But deliver us from evil."

Distant and low came the answer:

"Amen."

The tension broke with the suddenness of death, and he slipped low in the disordered bed, and lay flaccid, as if his body had become fluid. A wave of drowsiness flowed over him, and left him neither understanding, nor questioning, nor fear. His relaxed muscles ached from their long unrest, but that was all that remained to him in his half-slumber of exhaustion, a dull, delicious pain. Then, in the last moment before he slept, Julian imagined a face.

It was not a dream, for he was not yet asleep. It was not a vision, for his eyes were closed. He conjured it up as he might have conjured Margaret's; but this face was not Margaret's. Its lines were fashioned with the most perfect chastity and beauty; and in the boldly-modelled forehead a great sweep of brow opened like the spread wings of a bird, with long, heavy lids set low and level upon dark eyes. He saw, vaguely, as in a dream, a mouth short and full, purely cut and vividly coloured in the ivory face, a jut of lower lip which gave her the hint of a pensive smile. Blue-black hair was smoothed down on either side of her finely-shaped head, and drawn back to the nape of her neck. A lovely head, like the Amarna bust of Nofretete in a coiffure of Victoria. He saw it clearly for the hundredth part of a second, and lost it for ever.

Only the most tenuous thread of memory remained afterwards, like a meaningless glimpse of a dream washed up at daybreak on the shores of his mind. And a dream she might have been; for without his will, Julian fell asleep.

When he awoke it was daylight, a watery lurid dawn glittering upon fleeing leaves and wet grass. The amorphous sunlight falling upon him stirred his sleep, and he opened his eyes to it, and twisted his face into the shadow. It was still very early, and only the first distant sounds of the day had begun to filter into the stillness of Eden Close; but when he sat up in bed he could see the wan threads of smoke from many chimneys weaving a raft above Churchside.

Julian sat still, hugging his knees. He remembered clearly what had passed in the night; but it seemed now, in the calm of morning, no more than a bad dream. He could not even re-kindle in his mind the haunted terror it had known then. He felt the house round him bland and silent as it had always been, sleeping under the weight of its many years a deep and dreamless sleep. Everything was as normal as the sun's rising. From the direction of Queen Street the noise of early traffic began; and soon Mrs. Grace's widowed sister-in-law would be hurrying in to get his breakfast; and the Close would be full of children going to school, every narrow alley pouring its tributary stream into the flow; and he himself would presently set out for his partner's surgery, just as he had done from his lodging in more genteel Swan Gardens six mornings a week for the past year. It was a dream that he had been afraid, a dream that he had cried out to be delivered from evil, a dream that something unseen had answered bitterly: "Amen."

Julian looked round and saw the row of books beside his bed leaning together over a thin space where *Pearl* had

been; but it was a full minute before he found *Pearl*, lying open upon the writing-desk, close to the window.

He got out of bed slowly and crossed the room, and picked up the book. It lay open at the Apocalyptic vision of the jewelled cliffs of the City of God.

V

CARADOC'S CAMP

MRS. CATOR, who passed her days in a perpetual state of mild and enjoyable martyrdom, was, if she had only known it, one of the blessed ones of the earth. She had a devoted, if distant, husband in India, whom she was soon sailing to join, two charming sons who divided their overflowing good spirits between school and home with equal delight in either, plenty of money, plenty of interests, and Margaret Godber as a companion.

Sometimes the two high-spirited sons, the many interests and the much money, became altogether too much for her; and then Margaret's patience and common sense came into play. Mrs. Cator did not know what she had done before Miss Godber came, did not know what she would do in India without Miss Godber, did not understand in the least why Miss Godber should want to throw herself away upon a mere country doctor, like Julian Sears. A pleasant enough young man, of course, but quite dull, and with small prospects and no ambition. That was her attitude towards the forthcoming marriage, and she was incapable of concealing it. Margaret's days became punctuated with long accounts of the advantages which might have been hers had she agreed to go to India with her employer. She did not mind that. She hoped that Julian's friends valued him sufficiently highly to think

him thrown away upon her. Sometimes she thought so herself.

She listened with a smile, therefore, while Mrs. Cator held forth upon the folly of marriage at twenty-two, especially marriage into a country back-water when country back-waters were all one had seen, and kingdoms might be waiting round the corner. It was true that she had seen nothing of the world; and true it might be that all the plenty of the senses existed in waiting for her. But however far she journeyed, and however richly fortune tilted its horn over her, Margaret's arms could hold no more.

It was Wednesday again, and she was looking forward to another visit to Eden Close, when she was summoned to the telephone, and bidden instead to meet Julian at the midway station of Camber Fields.

She asked why, point-blank, as was her fashion.

"I've got some brown folk-weave for the dining-room curtains, and I want to measure up for them. Why can't I come as usual?"

Julian's voice, a little hesitant, said: "I think we could both do with a day off. We'll go up to Caradoc's Camp, and have tea there. It's much too fine to work."

"Just as you like," said Margaret, and set about making sandwiches for their tea. If Julian was tired, or perhaps just a shade off colour, they would do as he said, without further question from her. It was all one, Providence Cottage, or Caradoc's Camp; they would sit and watch the sun shine, and talk him out of his zenith, and that was all they demanded. She remembered the vague weight of conjecture which detailed reading of Patrick Mundy had left in her mind; that was to be shared. Of such was the business, the odd, rapturous business, of their meetings.

Julian was waiting for her on the platform at Camber Fields when the slow train jerked to a stop. His eyes searched the smoky windows for her, found her; and he came alongside at a loose lope, the seeding sunflowers racing away one by one beyond his uncovered head. They walked up from the dun station barriers together into the open windy stillness of hills, into a dazzle of golden afternoon; over the coal-dust, and slag, and clay where many pits had been, through old gold foam of broom and trailing clover, and aspen shiverings of half-grown birch-saplings; into a glittering plain of grass, through which a single footpath launched itself like the insubstantial track of the moon over calm water.

Beyond, the heathy hills rose again; but the little plateau of grass looked down two ways upon rolling meadows, a saddle in the centre of the hogback. From the middle of the path they could see the church spires of Charleworth, the white cross of New St. Julian's, the blot of green which was the churchyard of Old St. Julian's. Margaret, who was a little behind, touched Julian's arm to call his attention, and gasped when he jumped round on her in a startled and startling fashion.

"Hullo!" she said, alert but smiling. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing. What should be the matter?"

She had not noticed until then the dull, grey-blue circles which sank his eyes deep into his head, nor his pallor, nor the square of silk plaster stuck on the angle of his jaw under one ear.

"You are nervy to-day. And you don't often cut yourself. What made your hand jump in the middle of the shave this morning?"

Julian touched the plaster awkwardly. "Oh, I don't know. It just happened. It's nothing."

He did not tell her that a hand as light as her own had touched him as he peered at his face in the shaving-mirror; nor that the space behind him had loomed, when he sprang round on his heel, as empty as the palm of his hand; nor that, when he turned slowly back to reach for the ferric alum, and attend to the trickle of blood which ran down his jaw, he had found himself facing a badly-frighted man.

"Look, there's the camp," he said, pointing forward, where birch-trees canopied a few narrow trenches and the remnant of grey stone walls.

"Did you sleep last night?" asked Margaret, not to be diverted.

"I slept like a log. All too well, in fact—I was late for surgery this morning."

It was true. He had slept, for the first time in three days and nights, and for no better reason than that his weariness had overcome at last the infernal alertness with which his nights were filled; had slept out of sheer exhaustion, to dream of hands which touched him, and voices which called his name. He had dreamed, too, of a terrified Margaret who ran here and there through Providence Cottage, her hands skimming the black banisters, her feet tripping upon the hollowed stairs, her calm eyes distorted with fear, her straight, trim, friendly mouth fallen slack, pursued by disembodied voices and intangible hands; a Margaret who must not exist, who should not exist. In his mind he had divorced her for ever from Providence Cottage, had done it once for all on that first morning, when he had held *Pearl* open in his hand, and read the glittering picture of the New Jerusalem which something intangible, and wilful and strong, had read before him in the mid of night.

But Margaret asked him nothing more. She did not,

thank heaven, either tell him everything of her own mind or expect to be told everything of his. So they came to the camp in companionable silence; and the diversion of their afternoon from Providence Cottage to the open hills had not cost Julian a single lie. By the time they met again he would, he hoped, have decided what must be done.

Caradoc's Camp was named with the usual accuracy of ancient and neglected things. It was not a camp, nor had Caradoc, as far as history recorded, ever set foot in it. It was not even of his people, but Roman, and had once been a small but flourishing town, the habitation of a class of gallants who had aped the rustic to their own undoing. The richest households of the city which then occupied Charleworth's site had conceived a fad for possessing country villas in the hills, and out of their vanity had grown the precocious flower of a town; and the barbarians from beyond Severn had watched it put out its rich leaves one by one, until the time was ripe for plucking it. Scarcely a foot-high wall, or a sound paving-stone, had their raid left of Caradoc's Camp; behind their laden pack-horses as they departed at dawn there had lain only the shape in trampled earth and broken stones of what had been a town. So Caradoc's Camp had never enticed either the historian or the excavator; for only in its death had it anything worth calling a history, and there was not one thing in its soil of any value to anyone. But through eighteen centuries its bones had bleached in the saddle of the hills, undisturbed except by the winds, unhaunted, quietly dead and forgotten.

It was still quite easy to trace the beautifully straight lines of streets, the central rectangle of the forum, the brick outlines of shop cellars, and the little square hollows which had once been the artificial pools of impluvium.

and peristylum. All these were identified, docketed and abandoned long ago. Learned people had even traced in two shapeless holes what they claimed to be the temples of Cybele and Mercury, the latter in his capacity of rogue and thief, the patron deity, perhaps, of some of the prosperous business men whose villas had surrounded his shrine. In the precincts of Cybele a single weeping ash stood like a steep green umbrella, the only image the fertile goddess had left behind her for the wind, and the docks, and the clover to worship.

Margaret and Julian sat in the sun, with their backs against the tallest remaining wall, and the shining plain spread before them. They had often sat there before, in the drowsy sunlight, lifted against the sky. The only pity was that they should have to remember time, and the things which happened in time, Mrs. Cator's card party, Julian's six o'clock surgery. In Caradoc's Camp there was no time; whatever existed was immortal.

He lay down at her feet, among the sorrels and the cool clover. The wind swayed the heads of the grasses in a hissing dance, and yet the sunlight seemed still and solid in the air, like a golden dish-cover over a golden dish. He closed his eyes. She, watching every movement of his face, saw again how haggard he was; but she asked him nothing.

"I want to tell you about Patrick Mundy," she said slowly, "or rather, I want you to tell me about him."

"Don't let's talk about strangers," he murmured. "I don't think Cybele would like it."

"Cybele? Who is Cybele?"

"The goddess of the weeping ash."

"What sort of a lady was Cybele? Tell me about her."

"Oh, she hailed from Asia Minor, and was mother and patroness of all life. She rode in a chariot drawn by lions,

and wore a turreted crown, and carried the key of the world in her hand." His smile deepened in recollection. "Her garments were painted with divers colours, but chiefly green, and figured with the images of several creatures, because such a dress is suitable to the variegated and more prevalent appearance of the earth.' I remember reading about her in the *Æneid*. Like all those semi-Asiatic divinities, she has an awkward way of being human, too. She fell in love with a mortal called Atys, and when he was murdered she raised such a din that the simple citizens had to try and placate her by bringing her a statue of him. And she seems to have been easily pleased, because she accepted it."

"Poor Cybele!" said Margaret, looking at his closed eyes. "I suppose even that was better than nothing."

"You're the only person I know," said Julian, "who dare be sorry for a goddess."

Margaret had carried Patrick Mundy's book in her hand all the way from Camber Fields; now she opened it in her lap.

"Do you know, I don't think Patrick Mundy was a stranger. I believe he knew this place as well as we do." She found what she was seeking, rather less than half-way through the book. "Listen to this!

*Before my eyes and in my heart
The distant, blue-spired mountains start;
And o'er my mind and through my soul
The surging seas of grasses roll.*

*Never again shall I sit here
To the light-hearted winds a peer,
And never more shall I ride down
A free man into Charleworth town.*

There, doesn't that locate him here, in the camp? There are the blue-spired mountains, over there in Wales, as blue as a row of lupins; and here are the surging seas of grasses, all round us. It seems this old hill has seen more dramas than the burning of a Roman city, and more love-laments than Cybele's for Atys."

Julian opened his eyes upon her face. She had not moved a hand, and yet he could have sworn that she had leaned closer to him, for he had felt the stirring of a body close above his own; but she was still, and between the sky and his sight there was nothing but sweet air and honest light. He thanked God for a fullness of afternoon so brilliant that all the legions of the dead could stir and speak in it, and still not be believed.

"Go on reading. Why would he never be a free man again?"

Margaret dipped her brown head and read, her voice changing key oddly as she went:

*The hill winds wander as they list:
Her chain is ever on my wrist;
They hurl the rain, they fan the fire:
I drown and burn in my desire.*

"And is that the end?"

"The end of that one. But if you read through from the beginning it really begins to take shape. I don't think he set out to make a story of it, but it is a story. It's the story of a most unhappy love affair; and though it tells you practically everything about them both, I can't picture either of them. You might do better. The whole thing begins with such comfortable little tributes, and ends with such torture. At the beginning I think he has just discovered her. Listen to this, on the second page:

*Happy was heaven, the day God made my love.
Along the jasper sea the sails were gay,
The bright archangels soared like suns above,
And all the Seraphim made holiday,
Such joy there was that God had made my love.*

*How shall I praise, how serve, how love my love?
If all her words, if all her deeds were writ,
And all her beauty into colours wove,
Could the world's book hold half the sum of it?
So fair, so fine, so splendid, is my love.*

Julian said, laughing: "That isn't a lover, that's a knight-errant. Domnei in the nineteenth century; though I didn't know the nineteenth century went in for woman-worship."

"Ah, but that's only the beginning. A little later he was writing in a very different vein; and though there's no affectation about it whatever, it isn't any more—what shall we say?—bitterly real—than the first phase. Well, judge for yourself. This is a fair example:

*Where the pale sirens softly rise
Out of the deep, with amber eyes,
And spread o'er all the grey rocks there
The fathoms of their yellow hair;
Where topaz waves, white-fretted, lave
The deep-sea doors of cleft and cave,
And grey-green eddies stab the dawn—
From such a scene thy soul was drawn.*

*Where orient minarets uphold
To heaven their buds of pallid gold,
And marble domes and crystal cleave
With their chill breasts the painted eve;*

*Where wave on copper wave piled high,
The jewelled sands salute the sky,
And waxen blossoms star the air—
Was not thy form conceived there?*

*Where the pale ice-floes glitter bright
Beneath the chilly fires of night,
And with the dawning round them hurl
Tints as of jasper and of pearl;
Where the white hills lie still as death,
And frozen earth no more draws breath,
Where no trees grow, no saplings start—
There, there, alas! was made thy heart.*

She lowered the book, and looked at him. "There! Interpret! Does that tell you anything about its author?"

He answered: "Yes, it tells me a great deal. He was quite young, and still more in love with his own writing than with his inspiration; but he'd taken the virus all right. As for the girl—well, it's rather interesting that he should think of her as eastern. It's true he's vague enough about the kind of eastern atmosphere he wants, but still the note is there. And mysterious, at least to him; he compares her soul with the strangest things he can think of, the depths of the sea. No, his lady was not easy to fathom."

"And she didn't love him," said Margaret.

"Oh, it doesn't follow. If he was the shadow-man I take him for he wouldn't think of making her love him, he'd simply be hurt that she didn't respond to the overtures he never made. It's difficult for a solitary to realise his own solitude. No, suppose she was simply a lovely young woman, with a distance about her, and the ethereal quality which is often mistaken for coldness? There are

so few really cold people. Go on, how does his theme change next?"

"Into the dark period. It begins gradually, and lasts through most of the book, growing more bitter all the while. Nothing graceful or self-conscious about it any more. It begins with the verses I read just now, about the camp, when he has just realised that his freedom has gone; and it becomes a long series of soliloquies, night-pieces, most of them, and all in much the same metre. He's ceased to have any interest in words as words now; he's writing his own heart into verse because he must. Little things like this:

*The summer morn's their leaves uncloze
Each like a crimson, scentless rose,
And quench the moon, and put to flight
The pallid lilies of the night;*

*But neither morn, nor noon, nor eve
My wakeful spirit can relieve,
Nor white of lily, red of rose,
Restore my mind its lost repose.*

*No snows of God can cool afresh
The flesh which hungers for her flesh,
Nor all the might of man control
The soul tormented for her soul.*

Margaret raised her eyes. "You see?" she said. "The virus has taken hold. This is the real passion. But the strangest thing of all is the way it ends. After so much self torture he's suddenly calm and hopeful; and hoping, for what do you think?"

She spread the book upon the grass between the red

sorrel stems, and leaned upon her hands over it, and read in a voice unsteady with almost childish wonder :

*She came to heaven at mid of day.
With songs the golden courts were gay.
Her hair like raven wings was spread
By zephyrs from God's presence shed.*

*Beside the sea of glass we met;
With watching long her eyes were wet;
She ran, and I, how eagerly,
And kissed beside the glassy sea.*

*Like swords of fire her tears pierced through
The sea, the firmament of blue,
And streaming down the airy steep
Were rapt into earth's chilly deeps.*

*And there they hung, still burning bright,
A string of rubies in the night,
A constellation brighter far
Than Perseus and Orion are.*

*Then cried the Seraphs' glittering rout:
Let us cast these earth-lovers out,
Who sigh to part, and smile to meet,
And kiss before God's judgment seat.*

*But God looked down, and said: Let be!
Their meeting hands embraced Me;
And when they smiled, and kissed to greet,
They burned sweet incense at My feet.*

She stopped, raised her head slowly, and found Julian's eyes still closed. He lay so quietly in the grass that she

thought he was asleep; but his mind was alert behind the dropped lids. Two threads of thought had emerged gradually from the sound of Margaret's voice to trouble him, and he was sure that they were not the things which most troubled her. The fall of verses was strung upon these threads like a necklet of beads. One was the shadowy form of the unknown girl; and the other was the poet's preoccupation with archangels and seraphim, with the jasper sea, and the constellation of a saint's tears, and the judgment seat of God. Medieval in form was this chain of belief, encrusted with words and images like rococo jewellery, but within it was the crystal truth.

Julian was troubled. Out of the recesses of his mind two feelers groped out for the train of his present thoughts. For a long while he could not capture either of them. Then he remembered his copy of *Pearl*, lying open at the description of the Holy City, an outpouring of just such a faith, and just such a mind, glistening with all the jewels of language. He felt, too, that in the suggestion of the Oriental in this unknown woman, a suggestion which could not be entirely fantastic, there was something which he should have remembered. Somewhere, but he could not think where, he had seen a woman who had the head of Nofretete and the hair of the young Victoria. The thought of it led him back to Providence Cottage, though there seemed no reason why it should. So there, unless his brain was turning under the weight of unaccustomed experiences, he had two slender clues stretched between the poems of Patrick Mundy and the house in Eden Close.

Upon his hand, which lay palm upward in the sun-warm turf, another hand closed, slowly and softly. He lay still, and stopped breathing for a moment, and in absolute silence the cool fingers enclosed his hand. He

felt the chill of fear, no longer an unfamiliar sensation. He said in a low tone:

"Oh, God! Have you followed me here?" and opened his eyes full into Margaret's face.

She was leaning over him upon one wrist; and her other hand, which had been cradling his, now shrank under it into the grass. He believed that she had been smiling at him, but she was not smiling now.

"Did you know you said something then?" she asked.

"Did I?" he said stupidly. "What did I say?"

She repeated, in a voice lower than his own: "Oh, God! Have you followed me here?"

"Did I really? What an odd thing to say! I'm afraid I was just dropping off to sleep; I must have been dreaming."

"A bad dream, I should think," said Margaret.

Julian made, perhaps, a little too much haste to be casual. "Queer, isn't it, the odd things you do imagine when you're half-asleep! Worse than any nightmare. Though I haven't the slightest recollection of seeing anything, or saying anything."

He sat up slowly. There went his first lie, but he did not greatly care. He had, as a rule, no use for lies; but round Margaret he would build a seven-foot wall of them, if nothing else could keep out the cold strangers of Providence Cottage.

"What were we talking about?" he asked. "I mean, before I dozed off?"

"About Patrick Mundy's marriage in heaven." Margaret's confidence, if not her interest, had flagged. She spoke in a dull voice, and looked at him with eyes more guarded than he liked to see Margaret's eyes. She looked at Patrick Mundy's book, and sighed, and shut it slowly between her hands. "Oh, well, take it with you, and read

it through. At any rate, if it isn't good drama, it isn't bad poetry."

Julian put out his hand for the book; and though he had held it only once before, the heft of it seemed oddly familiar. He sat there in a tumult of wild thought and wilder feeling, his back against Cybele's precinct-wall, watching Margaret, who in turn watched the ripples of light flowing over the ocean of grass; Margaret, who had nothing of his mind, if she had all his heart. All of this had happened before; perhaps not to him, but it had happened. Other lovers had come innocently to this too old and sated place, had come as one person, and had sat here in silence by the holy places of outmoded deities, with all the ocean of time flowing between them. And others had come who were not lovers; and men had watched in torment women who watched the undulating grass in simple pleasure. One among them, perhaps, who had written that same night:

*The free winds wander as they list:
Her chain is ever on my wrist——*

He did not realise, until his finger-tips halted upon the indented wall to his left, that he had lifted and placed them unerringly upon one name of many which were cut and cross-cut into the stone. He threw himself down upon his elbow to read it. It was an old engraving, but it had been cut savagely deep, and the letters had filled with a brilliant-green moss, so that now an encrustation of emeralds spelled for him:

DAMARIS.

He did not know why his hand, wandering without his will, should have selected that one name from so many; nor why, now that he had found it, it should have power

to plunge into his mind with such significance; but "Damaris" was still ringing in his head when they turned their backs upon the weeping ash, and threaded the windy hills and the gold furze-brush to Camber Fields again. He watched Margaret borne away, and a little later boarded the slow train for Charleworth, and still his mind was repeating "Damaris".

Surgery was a dreary business to Julian that night, yet he dreaded its ending. Whatever part of his first fear had been personal was gone, even the unreasonable yielding to reason; but his mind was still afraid of Providence Cottage.

It waited for him, when he entered Eden Close from Red Harry Passage, in all its sunset beauty. Mrs. Philbin departed early in the evening, usually before he came home; and with her broad black shape went all that was human and blessedly commonplace in Providence Cottage. That tranquil, black and ivory shadow of a house remained, still asleep, still and for ever dreaming, and drawing him into its dreams.

He crossed the Close with a firm step and latched the gate behind him. The slanting sunlight, running before him, fastened upon the gilded benediction on the porch and presented it to his eyes like an illuminated address.

"Peace be within thy walls—And plenteousness
within thy palaces."

VI

"TO DREAM ON DAMARIS"

JULIAN sat by the open window of the bedroom in his pyjamas and smoked his pipe out to an accompaniment of Patrick Mundy's poetry.

Night was a fatal time at Providence Cottage. He strung out his evenings until midnight or after, in the hope of tumbling into bed at last too tired to remain awake for all the bodyless voices in the world; but fear is a potent power for wakefulness. He no longer hoped for peaceful nights; but at least he had passed the point where he met the terror half-way. While the room and the house would let him, he would smoke and read in peace.

He smoked and read, but the poems of Patrick Mundy held little of peace. He had opened the book at random, read here and there wherever his fingers led him; and then he lit upon one poem which held his attention so fast that he read and re-read it until his pipe went out. It was one of the night-pieces, and of the quietest among them.

*In between the azure stars,
Faintly stir the pale cloud-bars;
Far beneath, upon the lake,
Little eddies rise and break,
And the ripples from them fleeting
Shudder with impassioned greeting,
And beneath the sedges die
With an argent wizardry.*

*Thus have followed from of old
Things no mortal may behold;
Only I, with waking eyes,
Span the unhallowed harmonies;
While the hills, with faces fair
High-uplifted into air,
With their honeyed amber breath
Drain the dewy lips of death.*

*Ev'n so lovely and unkind
Dwells this woman in my mind;
Star and cloud and sedge and spring
Only of her body sing;
Sunset, dusk and night is she,
But she brings no sleep to me.
Still my sorrow and my bliss
Is to dream on Damaris.*

VII

THE RAMPARTS OF THE CITY

JULIAN awoke on Sunday morning in a mood of depression which refused to be exorcised by food, tobacco, books or music. Even the weather was against him. Mrs. Philbin remarked as she cleared the breakfast-table that it was a fine day for a walk; and since a cloudless sky and a blinding sun seemed to confirm her, for a walk Julian went; but by the time he had reached the park a high wind had blown up from the south-west, driving clouds before it like frightened sheep, to pile them together eastward until the sky was covered by a pall of purplish grey. Then down came the rain, and into the shelter of the horse-chestnuts scurried the Sunday tide of nursemaids with prams, optimistic children with scooters and fishing-rods, pensioners, lightly-dressed girls, dogs on leads. Julian shared a tree with half a dozen or more of these assorted Sunday promenaders; and together they stood dismally watching the roses and dahlias battered by rain and splashed with mud, their flaming colours streaming into the descending flood in red and orange and gold fountains which flowed copiously and yet were never diminished. Green pools gathered under the fringes

of the trees, scarlet ones under the borders of the flower-beds. Then the chestnut leaves began to bend under the weight of rain, and cold, heavy drops descended on the heads of the people beneath.

Julian was in no mood to wait patiently for the whim of the weather to change. It seemed to him that he had spent the morning under that tree, and as yet there was no sign of a break in the clouds. He turned up his collar and sprinted for it, cutting through Charleworth by means of the network of alleys which laced it everywhere like the strands of a spider's web. By the time he had reached Eden Close he was wet through; also the rain ceased just as he drew breath in the doorway, and the clouds began to dissolve before a watery sun; also Mrs. Philbin was considerably put out because an excellent lunch had to wait while he changed his clothes. It had not been a successful morning.

In the afternoon he was called out to a woman with a septic burn on her wrist. The wound turned out to be five days old, had been dressed with an inappropriate patent ointment on grubby cotton-wool, and was looking ugly. Julian found himself uttering some tart truths on the subject of hygiene, though as a rule he thought it no part of his duty to be sarcastic at the expense of people who, he knew from experience, did not realise that they could answer him in kind. He went home out of patience with himself as well as everything else, and lay in a corner of one window-seat in his hall, with a novel he was too restless to read.

The sun alternately glistened and hid, like an angry woman trying to blind with smiles the object of her hate. The iris which bloomed above Julian's head glowed now like a chalice of amethyst, and now hung heavily purple as opaque pottery. He felt, as he had felt for two

days and nights, the continual presence of the thing he feared. It was in the air around him; it had been beside him under the chestnut-tree, had surrounded him as he ran through the rain. It would shroud him as he lay in bed wakeful, and cover him when he slept, and he knew it. He had not heard it speak for nearly seven days, but every day he became more sensitive to its presence about him, by sounds as stealthy as the little winds, by the prickling of his flesh, and sometimes by the touch of insubstantial fingers upon him, as light as a falling leaf, and as cold as fear.

And what was he to do? The future loomed before his face like a blank wall. He had bought Providence Cottage; he had borrowed money to buy it; and now, love it as he did, he was afraid of it. He could not bring Margaret into that fear. How could he shut her out? Sell the house; Who would buy it? And how would he explain away his bargain to Margaret? There was no way round the wall; there was no way through it.

Julian did at night what he should have done in the morning; he went to church.

New St. Julian's was not one of the empty churches. If he opened his eyes he could see rows upon rows of heads bowed and raised together in the grey-gold air. He liked to see them so, the sun slipping through the western windows at their backs, and crowning every head; he liked to see at a glance so many people who believed in God, and to be alone amongst them in the invisible garments of his own belief. And if he closed his eyes there were many more, an unnumbered host, not all of this generation, not all, perhaps, of this world, people whose faces he could never focus, but whose forms and voices he knew. For it seemed to him then that his mind, even in its wanderings, was building fast at one of the

inconceivably precious walls of heaven, at the ramparts of pearl which rose above time and space. And instantly time was dead. Nothing was but this stillness which he could only suppose to be the peace which passes understanding; nothing was to be but the completion of the world's happiness, which would also be heaven; and all that had been was paid and pardoned. The cycles of man swung round to join up their circle, and in the moment of the linking of hands time fell into dust; so that in Julian's eyes were painted frescoes of one great present in which were all things, a tapestry wherein Cain killed Abel, and St. Francis stood among his little sisters the birds, and Mary Magdalene drew her cloak around her, and Alice Perrers stripped the rings from the dying hands of Edward of England, and Sir Philip Sidney held out to posterity all the wine of chivalry in a cup of water; and Abélard kissed Héloïse, and Judas kissed Christ.

So New St. Julian's, that offender of fastidious taste, lacked no beauty which Julian could desire for it. He could lose himself in it as a rivulet lost in the sea—in the jasper sea. How those old writers, Apostles and seers, poets of the Middle Ages, Puritans of the changing world—how they had loved their heaven, how they had poured upon it without stint every flower, and jewel, and spice their senses knew, how they had dredged the tongues of Christendom for adjectives with which to describe it, and combed out the spectrum for colours in which to paint it; and with what desiring they had desired it. Not in vain; for Julian at least would not have changed that golden city of theirs for all the streamlined heavens of a new vision whose very churches looked like factories.

The lay-reader, whose voice habitually went up and down in weighty iambics even through the lyric poetry of the second Isaiah, was not present; and it was the vicar

himself who read the lessons. He was a young man, and had a beautiful voice; and he read:

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

"Having the glory of God; and her light was like to a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal,"

Julian heard, close beside him, the rush of a breath like a sob. He had not realised until that moment that the companionship of the strange thing still pursued him; nor that it could, if it would, make its presence known in such a place.

"And the city lieth four-square——"

The rapid breathing continued at his side, tremulous and shallow, as if there sat by him a fellow-being in the last distress. He had never felt the humanity of the stranger so clearly as he felt it then, nor turned from it with such stubborn and superstitious dread.

"And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

"The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

"And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

He lost the vicar's voice in the rush of the air around him; for though no one turned to look, he heard the surge of an intense wind writhing here and there in the air about his head, and felt the thing beating its intangible body back and forth, and sobbing, and wringing its hands.

VIII

THE KEEPER OF THE CITY

THE Reverend Euan Pryce came through the wicket gate of the churchyard backwards, more intent on the end of a conversation with a choir-boy than on his path, since no one was ever in the lane at that hour. He groped behind him for the latch of the gate, and backed through into the arms of Julian Sears.

"Oh, I beg your pardon! Oh, hullo, Dr. Sears!" he said, swinging round. "Does this cut shorten your way home, too?"

He was still in his cassock, which was rusty black, and had been torn down in two slits from the pocket openings, and mended on one side with grey wool, on the other with dark-blue silk. He was taller than Julian, and more athletically built, but near sight had prematurely dipped

his broad shoulders, so that he walked with a young man's raking stride, and an old man's forward-thrust, peering face. His eyes, too, were edged with crows'-feet; but for the rest his face was young, and vigorous, and lean, and much weather-beaten from the outdoor life he contrived to lead.

"If you can spare the time to listen to me," said Julian, "I should like a long talk with you."

"As long as you like, my dear chap. Come up to the house, and let's be comfortable."

They had never had very much to say to each other beyond a casual word about the weather; but Julian, once installed in a deep chair in Euan Pryce's study, with a tobacco-jar invitingly open beside him, and his host enveloped in blue clouds opposite, found confidence singularly easy. It might have been because he had already passed the point when the fear of ridicule or disbelief could touch him; or it might have been because his chosen confidant, seen now alone, and apart from the insignia of an office which dwarfed even its greatest incumbents, was much more than a mere hearty, athletic parson. His face, quiet and pensive, carried in it now all that surplice, and cassock, and stole, and hood could imply; and perhaps something more which could not be even suggested by a material emblem.

The room was shadowy, facing east. It comforted Julian by its quiet, for all the exaltation was gone out of him, and the one thing he wanted was rest, and perhaps to be alone again after his ten days of never for one moment being alone.

He said: "I want you to tell me what to do. My house is haunted." His voice was as level as a sad child's, and as low as a sullen child's. He saw the figure opposite stiffen, and the pipe withdraw from the lips, and the eyes

suddenly flare wide in an intent stare, and hurried to cover the moment of disbelief, or at least of doubt.

"I've begun very badly. It isn't even so simple as I've made it sound, for it isn't so much the house that is haunted—it's myself. I'm telling no more than the truth when I say that I brought to church with me to-night a thing which is neither visible nor tangible, but which speaks, and thinks, and moves independently, of its own will; nor when I tell you, what you probably won't believe, that the thing is here with us now, in this room. I felt it touch my arm a moment ago; but somehow I don't think it will speak while I'm with you." He held out his hands, spreading the steady fingers wide. "You see? I'm neither drunk nor hysterical, and I'm no more imaginative than the next man; but I tell you in all seriousness that I'm a haunted man."

He waited for comment; of laughter he was no longer afraid. Euan Pryce tapped down the tobacco in his pipe with a brown forefinger, and was silent for a long time. Then he said: "Well, go on, tell me all about it. I must know everything."

"And you don't find it incredible?"

"I find nothing incredible," said Euan Pryce, "not even some of the things I'm offered as scientific fact. Go on."

Julian went on, without haste now, and without hesitation.

"I don't know that I was ever very much preoccupied with the idea of a supernatural world. I never had time to speculate on such things, and even if I had the inclination it must have been strangled long ago. So you must believe that I did not come into this case with any forethoughts or fears, or even warnings, of what was going to happen. It simply leaped at me out of the dark; and I accepted it. What else was there to do? If I could doubt

my own senses, but I can't; they never played me any tricks before, and why should they begin now?

"It began the first evening in Eden Close, before ever I moved into the house. You'll know Providence Cottage, of course, if only as the vicarage of Old St. Julian's. It dates back to James I, so they tell me, and is full of old panelling, old furniture, old ornaments; but I'm not ashamed to admit that I've looked up all the past history it seems to possess, and found no mention of ghosts, or tragedies, or any such thing.

"I own Providence Cottage. We were looking for a house, she and I—Margaret, the girl I'm going to marry—when we happened to light on this one, and fell in love with it at sight. We were shown over it, and in one of the bedrooms she put down a book which she happened to have with her—a little book of poems we'd just bought from one of the curio-shops in Queen Street. I can swear now that neither of us opened it, though I thought nothing of it then; but it was open when I turned and looked at it, and a page was turned in front of my eyes. Well, we try to be what we call rational, even at the expense of reason; and I told myself that the book had been casually opened by one of us, and that the page had turned because there was a natural pull upon it. The thing was so flat it had obviously lain open at every page in it, and many times over; and the paper was limp and brittle at once, with all the nature gone out of it; but still, I was determined to be rational.

"But there are limits to the distance one can make one's reason stretch towards unreason. I moved into Providence Cottage ten days ago. On the very first night I spent in it, without the slightest warning, unless you call a sense of dread a warning, a voice close above my face as I lay in bed called me by my own name. Julian! Just like

that—Julian! Not loudly, not exactly stealthily; just as a friend might say it to call your attention to himself in the night, when noise seems out of place; but clear as crystal, clear as fire—so that I could no more believe I'd imagined it than I could shut my ears to it when it came again. Four times it called me Julian; and when I turned up the light on a stark empty room it called me again. I couldn't put a direction to it, nor describe the voice, nor do anything but just be afraid. I cried out: "Deliver us from evil," and the tension seemed to ease; and then the thing answered: "Amen." And then I suppose I fell asleep. There was nothing more then, except that I think I dreamed about a most lovely woman. But in the morning there was something else; one of my books was gone from the row, and I found it lying open on a table several yards away."

"What was the book?" asked Euan Pryce quickly.

"*Pearl.*"

The vicar's eyes flared into excitement again.

"That's interesting. Where was it opened?"

"At the description of the Holy City. I remember it clearly. It happens to be one of my favourites, too.

*As John the Apostle saw it then,
Saw I that City of noble fame—
Jerusalem, new and royally dight,
As it was come from Heaven adown."*

"I wonder!" said the Reverend Euan Pryce, in a low voice. "I wonder! Go on with your story."

"That is my story. The same over and over. Three times since then it has spoken to me, and each time in my own name; and each time I've closed my ears. But every day now I can hear it moving about me, and feel

it touch me now and then, and hear it sigh, as if it could speak if it wished; and every day it moves freely round my house, and takes books when it wants them, and handles ornaments, and lifts vases of flowers from one place to another. So that now I'm beginning to feel it without help from any other sense, just as in the dark you know when some other human being is near you. And in the last few days I've found out something more about it. It is independent of the house; it is even independent of me, if it wished to be, but it doesn't wish. It goes where it will, but it wills to go where I go; and for three days and nights it hasn't left me for a moment, whether at the surgery, or out on rounds, or at home, or in the garden, or wherever I go under the sun, the thing is still there.

"Well, what does a man do when someone or something speaks to him out of empty air? What ought he to do? What ought I to have done? Do you know, I'd often wondered what my own reactions would be if I met what we call a ghost. I didn't think I should be afraid. But imagination is a poor substitute for the real moment; and I was afraid; I am afraid.

"I don't know that there's much more I can tell you about the thing itself. It speaks, and understands speech. It thinks, and it has a will; and I don't in the least suspect myself of being mediumistic, but no one hears or senses it except me. There was an old lady in church to-night, just in front of us; the air was threshing about over her head, and she felt nothing. And that's the most terrible thing about it, that it should be able to suffer. How can the dead be made to suffer? And yet, if you had heard the thing panting and moaning as you read——"

"As I read, what?" asked Euan Pryce abruptly.

"The second lesson."

The vicar nodded slowly, more to his own mind than

to Julian. "I see," he said. "'And I, John, was carried up of the spirit into an exceeding high mountain——'" He sighed. "And that's all?"

"That's all. You see, you must help me; not for my sake so much as for Margaret's. I've bought the house; I can't get out of that now; and yet how can I take her into—that shadow of death? And besides—I'm afraid for myself. You see, I'm a doctor; I can't afford to have nerves." He looked at the lean face of Euan Pryce, immobile within its nimbus of smoke. "You've been very patient; but what am I to do?"

The vicar was silent, sitting with hands linked before him, and so still that Julian began to be afraid that his sincerity had not been convincing. He said in a strained tone:

"I suppose you're too human, after all, to think me quite sane; but I swear——"

"On the contrary," said Euan Pryce, "I think you quite the sanest person I've ever met. Not every wise man has just such a focus of his own position in the scheme of things as to think there are things beyond his scope. We think our acquaintance the largest in creation, but the ants have knowledge we lack, and some of the beasts have one sense more than we. No, God forbid that I should think anyone mad because he has the sense to realise he doesn't know everything. What did you yourself think of your visitor? What would you have called him?"

"There have been times," said Julian, shuddering, "when I've felt inclined to call him the Horla. Wasn't that the thing?—the thing which was to come as an invisible and intangible power, and make a domestic animal out of man?"

"I don't think you need trouble about Guy de Maupassant. He either forgot, or failed to believe, that

we are made a little lower than the angels. No, I don't fear any Horla, or any other power of darkness. What interests me is the great probability that your guest is human. It is in the nature of things that men die; and in the nature of men that here and there one should miss his way, and get lost in the familiar. Nor does it seem to me at all unnatural that one of these lost spirits should show distress at hearing the vision of St. John, or reading the paraphrase of it in *Pearl*—in fact, that he should look at heaven, and long to enter in."

"Are you trying to tell me," demanded Julian, "that God would leave one of His creatures in such a ghastly state of nothingness?—to be neither man nor spirit?—to be caught in the machinery of the world even after his own machinery has stopped functioning? Why should that be possible?"

The vicar said softly, almost diffidently: "Because there were made in the beginning two exquisite and infallible things called free-will and cause and effect. People forget that, perhaps in their anxiety to sever themselves from all misery and sin. Why, they say, should such things be? Most of those who ask it are people who don't care a button either way. But free-will, and cause and effect, were given to us as breath to gods, and if we have used them as devils, whose fault is that? You can't live to yourself? Every deed, good or ill, done in this world is like a stone dropped into the sea; it sets up ripples which run outward; and because the sea is eternal, the ripples are eternal too. You stand with each hand full of pebbles, and throw in black or white, and God who gave you power to act for yourself does not interfere. But far out of your sight lives are made or broken by the thing you have done. And who can guess by what action of his own or another's the soul of your visitor was

washed out of its course and cast adrift in this backwater of life and death? But there was a cause, be sure of that."

"And what," asked Julian, "is God doing while his princes of the blood royal are damning each other?"

"Suffering," said Euan Pryce, "and loving. Suffering ten thousand times beyond man's capacity for pain, and loving ten thousand times above man's conception of love. But He will not move a finger to compel redemption, because that would be to destroy the God in us, which would be a loss more terrible than all our pains. For we are so made, my dear Dr. Sears, that of our own god-head we must choose and accomplish our own salvation."

"I see," said Julian slowly. "It's an interesting theory, but not a new one. The early fathers call it the Patripassian heresy—the doctrine of the suffering of God. Abélard taught it. God is grieving, then, for the soul left behind in Providence Cottage."

"I am sure He is," said Euan Pryce. He leaned forward, and sat stroking his long chin, and staring thoughtfully at Julian. "I know of no reason why that house should be troubled. It has no history. Certainly it is old, and many men must have died in it, but they were peaceful deaths. On the other hand, I know of no rules which can possibly control the reasons for a soul remaining fixed in the world. We're just beginning to approach the treatment of mental diseases in a rational manner, but we know so little about the remedies for diseases of the soul. We account for them, if we account for them at all, in such obvious ways. A house is haunted, we say, because a crime was committed there. Why should there always be violence? The griefs which bite most deeply are quiet griefs, and the most haunted place in the world is the

place where someone has been desperately unhappy. Did you feel that?"

"Yes," said Julian, wonderingly.

"And you were afraid? That was the sum total of your own feelings about it?"

Julian hesitated, for that fear seemed already lighter, and in retrospect much more shameful; then he said firmly: "Yes, absolute cowardly fear."

"It takes courage to call it so," said Euan Pryce, and pondered again, nursing his chin in his hand. "You say that no one else hears the movements of this—spirit?"

"I think not. Not yet. But I'm afraid for Margaret."

"Why for her more than for anyone else?"

Julian turned his head away. "Because she is Margaret; everything and everyone in distress goes to her. And I'm determined that this shadow shall not touch her, whatever happens to me."

"And no one else has any idea that there's something queer about the house?"

"I can't be sure," said Julian, "but I think its last owner must have discovered it. She was a rich American woman, who fell in love with the place at first sight, as we did. She spent a great deal of money on bringing it up to date; and after a few weeks she left it just as it was, and went abroad. Because she was a woman of whims, and her whim was over, they told me; but does it make sense to you?"

Euan Pryce leaned forward and tapped out his pipe against the bars of the grate. Then he sucked thoughtfully at the empty stem, and after a long silence resumed:

"You've told me so much that I can tell you in return exactly what you must do. Possibly you won't thank me for it, but still I'll tell you. There are two alternatives. One is that you leave the house at once, make whatever

explanations you can, settle down somewhere else, and forget that Providence Cottage even exists. But somehow I don't think you'll do that; so the other——"

He got up abruptly and crossed to the window, and stood staring out at the gathering dusk.

"Each of us has a vocation, Dr. Sears; and though we don't talk about it, each of us has given and is giving a great deal of himself to the odd deity he calls his duty. You could be in a fat practice among fashionable women if you had cared about that sort of thing. I turned down a rich living because I seemed to be doing at least some good here, and because the stragglers need a shepherd more than the body of the flock. We have, then, made the irreparable mistake of admitting that we have a debt; and once having admitted it, we must go on paying. I could no more turn away someone who appealed to me for help than you could close your door to a patient who called you up at midnight."

He turned slowly, and Julian saw that he was smiling. He came and leaned upon the table, narrowing his weak eyes to watch Julian's face.

"There was a patient who called you up at midnight, Dr. Sears, and you slammed your door in his face. His disease was of the soul, certainly, which hardly seems your province; but still he came to you. So that the alternative is—take up the case, let the poor devil in, talk to him, help him if you can, cure him if you have it in you."

Julian drew a long breath of wonder, and relief, and eagerness. He said in a very low voice:

"Is that my part? Is that what you would do in my place?"

"Yes, by God I would!" said Euan Pryce.

"Then, by God, so will I," said Julian.

He stood up and held out his hand. "I do thank you. There is virtue gone out of you."

"Are you at all afraid now? I shan't blame you if you are, for I expect I should be afraid myself. It isn't easy, as I know, to adjust your vision immediately to a new dimension; but a man is none the less a man when he has taken off not only the clothes of his body, but the clothes of his mind, too, and the clothes of his soul."

"I'm not afraid," said Julian; and it was true. He felt the burden lifted from his heart in the joy of having something definite to do. Now that the indecision was gone, the blank wall was down from before his face, and he saw clear air.

"If you want me," said Euan Pryce, "you know where to find me."

Julian walked home slowly through the cool of the evening, and came again to Providence Cottage, in whose fretted porch the last shower had painted, grey and glistening:

"Peace be within thy walls—And plenteousness within thy palaces."

IX

OUTSIDE THE CITY WALL

AS he closed the door behind him and stood in the dim twilight between the two rows of stiff irises, it seemed to him that he was walking a path between rigid flowers in an enchanted garden, and that presently there would be two people there, or perhaps more than two, though he would see no one. He almost started when, on the click of the hall door closing, the kitchen door opened; and then he laughed, for it could be no one but his housekeeper, who was not in any sense enchanted.

He swung on his heel, and: "Oh, Mrs. Philbin," he began.

But it was not Mrs. Philbin. This woman was taller by three or four inches, and slender, and straight as a lily, and carried the graces in her hands. She had paused in the doorway, and now all the light which was left found her and clung upon her. Tilted backward upon a long throat she carried a small, smooth head polished like ebony, with a great knot of black hair coiled upon the nape of the neck. The line of her brows crossed her face sheer and symmetrical, like the spread of a swallow's wings, and the eyes under them were large and dark, and yet luminous under their drooping lids, like heavily-shaded lamps. The lips of her short and shapely mouth were parted, and the breath flowed evenly between them, throbbing a pulse in her throat. She stood still, with her hands a little spread from her sides, looking at him without a word.

"Damaris," whispered Julian.

He knew in an instant what he had said, what the sight of her had meant to him, what he had called her. He knew, too, that what he remembered in his soul of the lovely woman of his waking dream fitted like a gown upon this woman's body. But the name had leaped to his lips without his will, by an instinct which he could not believe was altogether his own.

The woman raised her hand and switched on the light; and instantly the lustre fell from her, her slenderness shrivelled into the lean dryness of early middle age, the sheen dissolved through her dull black hair, her eyes sank into purple hollows; and she became nothing more than Mrs. Grace, staring at him from the kitchen doorway, Mrs. Grace in her Sunday dress, with a pulse beating in her throat.

"It's only me, doctor," she said in a low voice. "Louie's gone to see to father, so I just came in to get your supper."

"It's very good of you," stammered Julian, struggling through his trance, "but you needn't have bothered."

She said: "It's no trouble. My man's not home, and I've got nothing special to do." Her lips trembled open again, as if she had meant to say something more, and found no utterance left to her. Her eyes clung to his face. Then he saw that the illusion had been more than an illusion; for though the round smoothness of her flesh and the brilliance of her colouring were gone in the disenchantment of the light, there remained to her every one of those beauties of outline which had raised the stranger before him. Not an illusion, but a resemblance; a family likeness, he might almost call it. He had never, until then, wondered who Mrs. Grace could be, where she had won the grace and "fineness" which sat upon her so strangely; but he wondered now. For in a moment she seemed to have shed all her connection with the things which were hers; even her boy Jo, peeping round her shoulder from the kitchen, could not touch the plane on which she stood. He was a pleasant enough child, with his red hair and his freckles, but he belonged wholly to his father, the weedy, ginger-fair bricklayer's labourer, not to this dark, remote woman who in her unguarded moments looked so like Damaris.

He lifted his dazed hand and rubbed his forehead. How did he know that she looked like Damaris? What right had he to identify a woman in a dream with the woman of the poems, with no shred of proof in his hands that either had ever existed out of imagination?

"Why are you looking at me like that?" asked Mrs. Grace, in a rushing undertone. "What was that you called me a minute ago?"

"Called you? Did I speak? I must have been thinking aloud; just for a moment you reminded me of someone else."

She stared at him for a moment longer, and then dragged her eyes from his face with a perceptible effort.

"Your supper's ready," she said. "I'll just fetch in the tray." But the return to normality was not to be accomplished so easily, for he knew by the haste of her voice and the confusion of her gesture that she, like himself, moved through a mist. She turned and walked past Jo as if she could not see him.

Julian went into the dining-room, and left the door open behind him. He heard her dismiss Jo, not impatiently but abstractedly, heard him clatter away through the hall door on his way home, and run down the gravel path shrilly whistling. The window was open, and the wind, small but uneasy, rustled the unkempt cabbage roses whose sweetness came surging into the room in waves at every gust. Julian looked round the shining dark walls, and saw in a dozen points his own face reflected. It was still light enough to see clearly, though not to read; and though his Sunday night supper usually was accompanied by a book, he wanted no book that night, no veil of words between himself and his own mind; so he did not turn on the light.

Mrs. Grace, not content with having spread a feast for him, lingered to wait upon him as he ate. He was glad he had not turned on the light; for as she moved about silently he could catch sometimes, in the turn of her head, in the length of her step, momentary glimpses of that other woman, as brief as the flash of a glance, as if she were no more than a mirror reflecting the past.

He must find out more about Mrs. Grace; more than she herself knew, perhaps. She had mentioned a father.

He remembered having heard of him before, as an invalid for whom either Mrs. Philbin or Mrs. Grace had always to be fetching or carrying. The widow, though she was connected with the old man only by the slender thread of being sister to George Grace, lived with him and looked after him with her usual efficiency in the intervals of keeping house for Julian. Mrs. Grace, who had been Dora Mullen, lent such of her energy as her husband and three children left her.

"How is your father, Mrs. Grace?" asked Julian. "He's not bed-ridden, is he? Mrs. Philbin seems to spend a great part of her time on him."

"Oh, he's a cripple," explained his daughter, "has been for years. He can get about, just round the garden, you know, when the weather's fine. But he's having one of his bad turns just now; been in bed nearly a month. He's very good about it, though, and folks are very neighbourly, they do lots of little things for him. And Louie and me between us manage pretty well."

"Was he injured in an accident, then?"

"Hurt in the pit, up beyond Caradoc, very near ten years ago. But that isn't his trouble now. He's just terrible low. They say it's his heart giving out on him. He's a good age, but not all that great—only seventy-two."

Julian had been racking his brains for a way of framing further questions without seeming inquisitive; but now an honest sympathy overrode his purpose. He saw the cheerless life of the old man, confined by four walls, and a square of sky and chimneys, and perhaps three human faces, and the deeply buried instinct of his own claustrophobia seized him in a horror of compassion.

"How lost and lonely he must be! What does he do to keep from thinking? Read, do crossword puzzles, listen to the wireless?"

"Well, his sight isn't very good; but he likes to have the wireless on, though it's only a second-hand set we bought from another man in Folly Crescent, and it makes an awful noise. George has tried to make it better, but he isn't any good at those things. It's company father wants, though. Until I was married I used to be with him so much; I was the only one, you see."

"He must miss you very much," said Julian.

She said in her direct and yet grudging fashion: "He never wanted me to marry George, though, anyway. Nothing was good enough for me. He said his mother was a lady born, and threw herself away on a collier, and he meant me to get back to the shelf she stepped off. And all the stepping I did was out of Folly Crescent into Eden Close." She laughed and shrugged her shoulders; he saw the gesture as she passed the window. "Shall I put the light on, doctor?"

"Not yet, please. Don't you think we might do something with that wireless set, Mrs. Grace? I'm not at all bad with them; perhaps with a few new parts I could make something of it. Would you like me to call and see him?"

She turned squarely to face him, and he saw the sultry lamps of her eyes, and sensed that her mind was not on anything they had been saying, but somehow fixed uneasily upon him. But she answered readily enough:

"Dr. Headley has been coming to him; but I don't see as he'd mind, as you're his partner, if you came instead. I know father would like you; you're good with old folks—and children, too."

"I really meant to call simply as a friend; there'd be only one bill, Mrs. Grace. But I can easily get Dr. Headley to let me take over the case, if you really wish it."

He did not at once look up, and the second of dead silence while his eyes were not upon hers fell upon his senses with an eerie touch, so that he raised his head sharply, half fearful that she would have vanished, or that a younger and lovelier woman would be standing at her shoulder in the dusk. He saw her hands clenched upon the back of a chair, and her pale face shining faintly. The thin pretence of interest in what he was saying, the effort of listening, and the greater effort to cover her preoccupation, all were gone. She looked at him with the most candid and the stillest dread and despair he had ever seen.

"I ought to have told you," she said in a hopeless voice. "I knew all along that I ought to have told you, not left you to find out for yourself. It wasn't right of me. It was wicked. And the young lady, too, such a sweet young lady——"

Julian's chair shrieked as he pushed it back and sprang to his feet. He was speechless and trembling. He could not think why he should be trembling; it seemed particularly stupid when he no longer had anything to fear.

"But you both loved it so," cried Mrs. Grace desperately, "and it seemed such a shame it should lie empty. And I hoped it would treat you all right, and that things would stop happening; but I know they haven't. I can tell by your eyes. Ever since you came here you've been changing; you've not slept right, and every moment of the day you looked worried to death. I know. I've watched you. And I ought to have told you, but I couldn't—you liked it so much, and it had been lonely so long——. But I knew it wasn't right to let you do it. I knew what sort of things went on here, in this house——"

Her volubility was terrible because it was so unaccustomed. Even now that she had launched the flood

of confession the words came rushing painfully, like speech between sobs, writhing the full mouth as they fell. When she faltered Julian had her in focus again. The calm came back upon him.

"What do you know?" he asked. "What sort of things do go on in this house?"

"Things are moved about without anyone touching them, and cushions are disarranged, and flowers are picked, and books are opened—and noises, too, things creaking—and sometimes a sound like moaning. Oh, I knew, I knew all along. I knew why the Chatten woman ran away from it. That morning when she came in and gave me the key, even before she said anything, I knew. 'That place is possessed by devils,' she said to me. 'I've lived in terror of it for a month, and I can't stand it any longer. I'm going away. I'll never enter it again, and I hope to God I never see it again.' And then she cried; and then she turned and rushed out of the house, and I didn't see her again."

She drew a step nearer, only one step; even at that moment, when she seemed to have put on a personality as strange and startling as the flood of words in her lips, she was a very still woman. "And now it's got hold of you, too. Oh, I ought to have warned you. I know, I've watched you and seen the trouble grow on you every day. You've taken to starting at the slightest sound—and looking over your shoulder. And look at the eyes of you, sunk in your head with worry and sleeplessness——"

She stopped and made a small, helpless gesture with one thin hand. His calm welled over her slowly, and set even her fear adrift, so that she could say no more.

"But you're not afraid of the house yourself?" asked Julian in a low voice.

"I've known so long that I've got used to it. But I

wouldn't stay here at night, not for a thousand pounds."

"It's all very interesting," said Julian deliberately, "and I'm glad you've told me. But I assure you there's no need to reproach yourself on my account, Mrs. Grace, because I've not been disturbed at all. I've not heard nor seen anything out of the ordinary, not even at night."

He was watching her face closely to see the effect of the lie; and the incredulous but hopeful ease which flushed slowly into her cheeks more than paid for it.

"I'll admit I have been very worried lately, and perhaps I haven't slept too well, either; but that's not the fault of the house. I've been worrying about a patient who wanted me to take him on. It's a strange case, and rather out of my province. But that's all over now. I've made up my mind; I'm going to take the case. So you see, you needn't worry your head about me."

He met her eyes steadily, for he dared not risk her disbelief. It was no part of his plans that she should torment herself for his sake, or trouble with distracting anxiety the isolation in which he wished to lock up his problem. But though he did not know it, Mrs. Grace could not now doubt the perfection of anything he said or did. He had become for her a gentle paragon who never complained of the way she washed his collars, or the noise the children made at his front gate in the evenings; who did not find his neighbours at all uncongenial, nor refer to Eden Close as a slum; who, so far from objecting to the depredations of Jo upon his property, the many excursions after lost balls, the occasional lapses into which the currant-bushes lured him, was disposed to find excuses when others accused him. For Mrs. Grace there was nothing less than truth in Julian. Her clenched hands relaxed slowly, and a shade of colour returned into her pale cheeks. She said uncertainly:

"You'll be thinking me a fool—imagining things like this——"

"Oh no, Mrs. Grace, I understand what you mean, of course. I'm not such a narrow idiot as to think I know everything in the world. But I do think that you're perhaps more sensitive to immaterial things than most of us." He smiled at her. "Who knows? Perhaps I shall be initiated later. But I feel quite safe as yet—and very earthy." Julian did not think himself at all a bad liar, perhaps because he was lying for everyone's sake, and hurting no one.

He walked past her into the lounge. It was almost dark, the array of windows stippled in shades of iris and Tyrian purple, the lilac trees shaking outside with a faint rustle of leaves and rattle of dry seed-boxes. He had not yet had time to cut them back from the glass, so that their branches moved against the lamp at the corner of Red Harry Passage like a lace fan, and the diamond panes shimmered like a pointillist painting with pin-points of colour and light.

Julian stood still, with his forehead against the cold glass, listening to Mrs. Grace moving about in the dining-room behind him. Doors opened and closed, and the clatter of her loaded tray receded from his hearing; and after what seemed a long time she returned to open the door and say through it, in a very low voice:

"Good night, Doctor Sears."

"Good night, Mrs. Grace, and thank you."

After she had gone he sat late in the hall, not reading nor attempting to read, not even thinking with any coherence or reason, simply waiting for the evening to pass away. Not until almost midnight did he go upstairs to bed.

It was not very dark, for the moon was well in its

second quarter, and only a few ragged clouds remained to hide it now and again under their moist translucent greyness. There was something cold about the angular lights and the straight sentinel shadows which stood up under his window; something, too, in the lingering film of the rain over walls and leaves, of the limpid stillness of some world under water. He looked down upon the familiar prospect of Old St. Julian's; and though the ashen leaves span in the wind, and the broken walls still dripped mournfully into the grass, it seemed to him as frigidly distant and still as Savannah la Mar under its deep lagoon. Nor were there now any people, living or dead, in that lucid waste of earth and air. He had the world to himself; and now that loneliness had fallen upon him, the longing for loneliness was gone.

Julian sat up in bed and opened *Pearl* upon his knees to re-read for the hundredth time lines which he knew by heart. From his pillows he saw nothing of the mystery beyond the windows, only the flat opaque surface framed between the carved bedposts, and the plane of light from his reading-lamp severed half-way up the wall, and above him the vague blackness. His hands, holding the book, seemed cut off from the rest of him by that knife-edge of shadow. They might have been someone else's hands.

*A crown that maiden wore, bedight
With margarites, and no stone else;
High pinnaced with clear white pearls,
With figured flowers wrought thereon.
No other tire was on her head;
Her hair, too, hung about her neck;
Her look was grave as duke's or earl's;
Whiter than whale-bone was her hue—*

Julian thought of Margaret. It seemed to him now a prophetic dispensation of God which had bestowed on her that name; she who was the flower of womanhood, fit to be the Marguerite-pearl of any chivalry, and more than that, a pearl of great price in the coronal of an everlasting world. He thought of every excellence in her, of every beauty; and his heart ached for her confidence; but some veil of excitement had dropped around him, so that even the vision of her was become poignantly remote.

And heaven! What did he know of it? What did he hope of it? Was there really anything in these golden visions to ravish a soul which had loved green valleys, and silver water slipping through speckled sand, and wood anemones in the wind, and the unadorned head, the irregular, delightful, sufficing face of Margaret? Margaret—*simplex munditiis*—plain in her neatness? Or was it that the vision of the Holy Afterwards had been simply one instant, absolute impression of everything most exquisite and most desired?—so that there remained of it to be recorded only a memory of a glory which outdid words, and overflowed every artifice of the saint's despairing pen? Julian thought so. Men wrote as they could, not as they would; and even the poet of the Apocalypse had only a man's tongue to sing the bliss which silenced the archangels. And he had done well. No one in the world had ever sung it more nobly.

*As John the Apostle saw it then
Saw I that City of noble fame—*

He stopped. He raised his head. It was scarcely audible enough to be called a sound, and yet his ear had caught it, the rustle of fingers passing over the covers of

his books. He sat as still as he could, drawing long, soundless breaths between his lips, listening with every nerve of his body, in an intensity which scalded his senses. He was not afraid; only that painful awareness remained to him, and even that had assumed an eager note. And if fear had been terrible, the loss of fear was much more terrible, so far did it set him from the comfortable world he knew, and so near to this alien thing which he did not know. He clung fast to *Pearl*; for in that he had a gospel which touched all worlds; and he needed the assurance of something eternal, for he knew that the moment was upon him, perhaps the supreme moment of his life.

The groping hand was still, for it had reached the end of the row, and failed to find what it sought. Julian bent his head to the book and began to read aloud in a firm voice:

*As John the Apostle saw it then
Saw I that City of noble fame—
Jerusalem, new and royally dight,
As it was come from heaven adown.
The burgh was all of burning gold,
Burnished bright as gleaming glass,
With glorious gems about it set,
With twelve steps rising from the base,
Foundations twelve, with tenons rich,
And every slab a special stone;
As in Apocalypse this same Burgh
John the Apostle pictureth well.*

He heard the air stir above him, in the frame of the bedposts, in a long, hopeless sigh. He put down the book, and raising his face, asked:

"Do you understand? I've been waiting for you. I'm not afraid of you now. Speak to me. Try me. If you want my interest you have it—and my friendship——"

There was a moment of deep silence, and then the voice of the unseen creature whispered reverently:

"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift."

X

SUNDAY NIGHT

JULIAN waited for the tones of the stranger's voice to die from his ears, for while the slightest echo of them remained, he himself was dumb. Then he raised himself upright against the pillows and, leaning forward, asked:

"Will you do something for me?"

"Anything," replied the stranger.

"I can't realise you with only one sense. I want you to be real to me. Will you touch me?"

A hand brushed his temples, and was drawn slowly down his cheek. Cool, but not colder than flesh, and with a touch as light as a woman's, and nervously elusive; a hand which he thought might well have turned back from many a half-finished task. From the moment that it fell lightly upon his forehead the thing became a person.

"No, don't move away from me. Don't you see how hard it is for me even to believe in you? For my sake and yours, give me everything you have that can prove you and keep you proven a man. Take my hand!"

"That is the last gesture of friendship," warned the unseen; and even the voice had now put on its body, in a bitter and mocking sadness. Quiet, but pitched high, and with a ring like a tenor bell. Julian had sometimes heard the same quality in Irish voices.

"I mean it for that. Though you ought to hate me for standing aloof so long."

The shadow of a laugh, as elusive and sad as the wind, rang through the room; and upon Julian's outstretched hand another hand closed. The touch of those fingers had troubled him with the eerie thrill of a bat's flight; but the grip of them seemed to bite to the bone, to plunge into his heart and possess it. He closed his other hand over the wrist, and from his finger-tips through all his body the fervour of the bodyless dead flowed like rivers of fire. He could not speak. He could not move. He closed his eyes, that he might forget the void air where the hand lay; and then he could see it, a small hand for a man, flat wristed, muscular, admirably shaped, as elegant and as bold as a rapier.

"I'm ashamed," he said, "ashamed of ever being afraid of you."

"Oh, Julian, Julian, if you knew what a miracle you are! You should be proud, not ashamed. I've waited a hundred years for you, for a voice to answer me, for a hand to touch me, for a man who would not run from me as if I were the threshold of hell. A hundred years, oh, God!" The voice broke, and was still.

"But I was afraid," cried Julian. "There was nothing heroic in me. A better man than I am showed me what to do, that's all." He reached up a hand blindly towards the table, and turned out the lamp before he dared open his eyes upon the gracious darkness. "I can't see you; but at least let me imagine you. Go on talking, and you'll be as solid as this hand to me."

"Fear!" sighed the voice, with a dreary laugh. "Do you find it very terrible? And what do you think it's like to have people fear you? To see their faces blanch like dead wax at the first word you speak, and their eyes drop

into stony hollows, and the beginning of madness come into the holes? And to hear them scream when you touch them, when you touch them so gently, so humbly——”

“Horrible!” cried Julian, shuddering. “But we didn’t know—we didn’t understand—any of us—what we were doing to you.”

“No, how could you? But you had your revenge, for you made me afraid in my turn, afraid of that fear, afraid to tempt it by reaching out a hand for the fellowship I wanted. But the loneliness, year after year, age after age, sitting here in the silence and emptiness, passing through the streets unseen and unknown, outside heaven, and earth, and hell! What could I do but claw at every chance of companionship? A century of that, and no escape, and no hope of escape through all eternity.”

The voice had risen to a cry of horror, which rang in Julian’s ears like a physical pain. He clutched at the hand that writhed and twisted in his hold; and presently it lay passive again.

“But why?—why?” cried Julian.

“Hush! Forgive me! The wilderness is peopled now, by God’s mercy and yours. Remember, no one has listened to me for many, many years. It’s like being drunk again.”

“But why is there no escape?”

“Because I closed it, Julian. Because I bricked it up with my own hands, and what I’ve done I can’t undo.”

“There must be a way of undoing it,” said Julian. “if not for you, then for both of us together.”

“Tell me so, for pity’s sake; but don’t believe it yourself. I’ve waited and hunted and prayed for a hundred years, but I’m a prisoner still. And no man can deliver his brother. Don’t talk of it now. This is joy enough for one century, simply to hear you offer me your help.

If you can forget that I have no body, and have no more right in this world than in any other——”

“I shall never think of you again as anything but a man, and my friend.” It was true. He had never, among the normality of men, encountered anyone who was more a person than this disembodied voice and this strangely compelling hand. “Besides, now, at this moment, I almost see you. You were young when—when you——”

“When I died. Yes, I was young. Twenty-seven years old, as I remember.”

“Tall, and rather more than ordinary strong. Your face I can’t see; but you wore two rings here, on this finger. I can feel the hollows they left.”

“My father’s seal, and the marriage ring my mother gave him.” The voice sank low.

“How is it that you have no substance, and yet I feel even the intimacies of your hand so clearly?”

“I am as ignorant as you. Perhaps it is only the sympathy you have for me which raises this ghost of a ghost. All I know is that I have no body, that the hunger and thirst of the body are gone, and that the soul’s hunger and thirst are much more—much more——. Go on with your exposition. What more do you know of me?—for I think there is something more. Tell me my name.”

Julian said, very slowly: “Your name is Patrick Mundy.”

There was a long silence which dragged at his heart with a dead weight of sorrow. He felt tears sting his eyelids. The rising wind plucked at the half-open window as at one string left unbroken on a lute long since thrown away. No death, no pain of his own or another’s, had ever had such power to hurt him as the cold quiescence of the hand he held.

“How did you know?”

"There were things in the manuscript verses which linked Patrick Mundy with this house; and there was *Pearl*. The account in the Apocalypse, and this transcription of it; you loved—you coveted them so greedily; as Patrick Mundy loved to write about the bright archangels and the jasper sea. And, too, there was Damaris."

He felt the invisible hand, sensitive as a delicate magnet to every word he spoke, quiver and clench upon the name. "What do you know of Damaris?" asked the voice, in bitter challenge.

"I saw her once. It was the first night I slept in this room, when you had left me. You were thinking of her then. I was half-asleep, and the fear of you had just lost its urgency and left my mind empty; and I think that somehow your thoughts came into me, for I imagined a woman. I couldn't remember afterwards what she was like; but now that you are here I see her quite clearly, as clearly as I saw her then." He said lamely, for he knew of no words in which to describe her: "She is very beautiful."

"Yes. Yes, very beautiful." Julian's heart contracted at the tone. "Damaris Ferne—Damaris Belgaine. A body like Diana in first youth—a face like an oriflamme, and eyes like the bottomless pit—— But nothing more. No heart and no soul inside that sleek black and white. No mysteries behind those mysterious eyes—nothing. Do you know what it's like to be one of the heathen in their blindness, bowing down to wood and stone? No, how can you! Go on being an idyll; two lovers in the garden of Providence Cottage; Margaret and Julian. I can wish you nothing better in this world." He gave a short and shallow sigh, and suddenly plucked his hand away; and from the far side of the room his voice resumed on a lower note. "Better think again, and think once for all,

Julian. Why should you spend your sympathy out of the world where it belongs? Go back to the normal. Send me away. It will be quite easy. I'll go if you tell me to go."

"Where will you go?" asked Julian.

"I don't know. What difference does it make?"

"Do you seriously think that I should ever be able to rest again, with the thought of you in my mind?"

"No," said the poet. "No, it is my fault. I should not have followed you; as I have, day and night. I should not have spoken to you, that first evening, nor made free of your books, nor pointed you to the name of Damaris at Caradoc's Camp. But I wanted you. Every sleepless child wants to wake someone else for company."

"I am wide awake now," said Julian. "Tell me more. If you're free of the whole world, why did you stay in this house? Was it because the memories of—her—were clearest here?"

Silence again, and for so long a time that Julian, listening nervously in the growing tension, began to believe himself deserted. Nothing in the body could have been still with this stillness, and it was only too easy to forget that nothing but the body suffered the conventional limitations of time and space; and the moon, now at its zenith, felt for the stranger with white silent hands along the floor, crossed the spot where his invisible feet rested, and found nothing. Julian swung his legs out of bed in a great hurry, and padded across the room with some vague instinct to check at all costs the flight of his unearthly companion, but with no idea in the world of how he was going to do it.

"Patrick, where are you? Patrick, come back!"

He ran full into arms which circled him with the shock of closing waves, and was held gently, while the dazzling

expanse of wet, moon-silvered roofs and shaking leaves spread empty and tranquil before his face. And for a moment his flesh revolted, not in panic now, but in an atavistic shrinking from this thing which was outside the physical. He felt his body contract, and knew that the poet had felt it, too, for the hands flinched from his shoulders and were gone. It was over in a moment, and with his returning balance there came a bitter, unreasonable shame.

"I'm sorry!" he cried breathlessly. "You startled me. And after all, I've got the instincts of flesh. I can't murder them all in a few minutes. Let me have time to grow—remember I'm out of my world——"

"God forbid I should blame you for being a man," said Patrick Mundy. "I know the idioms. I was a man myself once." He sighed, and there was a hint of something more than sadness in the sound, as if the lips at whose shape Julian could not even guess had curled in a brief, wild smile. "But I was thinking of other things—old things. Of this room, where I watched her die—where I watched her lie in his arms night after night, until the last illness came. Damaris Ferne—Damaris Belgaine—— And even now, if I could only see that black head of hers on the pillows there, for so much as one moment, I would endure another century without a word of complaint, without even a prayer."

"In peace?" asked Julian quietly.

"In much more pain, but what does that matter? This room! There is nothing in it that isn't scented and possessed of Damaris. Do you wonder I couldn't leave it? Her writing-desk—her mirror—the casket which used to hold her slippers; and the Charles I bed—her marriage-bed—the bed where she lay with him—the bed in which they laid me to die."

There had been times in Julian's life when he had been aware, at the strangest moments, of a great tenderness within him, objectless, hovering, like the bodily expression of a blessing, helpless, compressed into the compass of his mind. He saw no virtue in it; indeed, it seemed to him a useless sentimentality, which troubled the balance of his faculties when detachment was most urgently needed; but he could not control it. He felt it stirring in him now, as he said:

"Please tell me; if, that is, you can bear to tell me ever. It isn't a question of time. I must understand, for there'll be nothing secure between us until I do."

"And you want security? Very well, I'll tell it now, all of it, every detail I remember. On your own head be it; and God be thanked for you, Julian Sears."

Julian swung himself on to the foot of the bed, and lay there, nursing his chin in one palm. He had wandered so far from his own world now that his eyes no longer hunted the air with either fear, or a sense of anything abnormal, but only with a dull, growing ache of desire. Time had so utterly ceased for him that he did not miss the tick of the clock he had forgotten to wind.

Patrick Mundy began his story.

XI

THE STORY OF PATRICK MUNDY

I CAME to this house when I was twenty-one, to read in the classics with Dr. John Ferne, who was then vicar of St. Julian's, and much esteemed among scholars for his translations from the Greek and Latin. I doubt they are forgotten now; they were too pedantic to please for long. But in those days they had won him something

of a reputation as a classic coach; and young men who for any reason coveted an accomplishment in dead languages came to him for courses of study. And among them came Patrick Mundy.

I forget why I came. It is all so long ago, and so far away from anything I feel now. But I think I had a love for learning in those days, and a greater love than all for the learning which was dead and in its grave. At least I came of my own will, for I was of age, an orphan, and master of an estate in Connaught, and a house here in the Midlands, close to the Welsh border. The one had been my mother's home; the other was my father's place, a straggling hall and farm up in the hills yonder; a dozen miles out of the town. They were both entailed; failing my own children, to a cousin in London, whom I never saw nor wanted to see. I was not greatly concerned with money or property; letters were my loves. And I conceived myself, God knows why or how, to be a poet. Virgil was to be my spiritual master; so I came to the fountain-head of Dr. Ferne to drink him to the dregs.

I did not know, of course, that the fountain was dryer than the dust of graves; and by the time I discovered it, it had ceased to matter; for by then Virgil was gone from my mind, and Damaris was throned in his place, and there were tears to shed for my own sorrows.

I can tell you little of myself. To tell the truth I do not know what manner of man I was, not even whether I was indeed a man until the hour that I first saw Damaris. There was a certain arrogance about the loneliness in which I lived, as if I believed no one fine enough of spirit to be my companion; but indeed it was not an intentional arrogance. I did not think of myself; I was not interested in myself. I knew myself reasonably good-looking, well-to-do, decently educated, and having

the accomplishments thought proper to a young man in my position. And that was all I knew of myself. It is only now, now that I have lost all these things, now that the comely body, and the gifts, and the dross have fallen away, and left me still the same person, that I need to know more.

And a poet! I had forgotten; I was a poet. Not in the flight of my dreams; my dreams were as austere as a diptych of Middle England, knit to earth and heaven, with no glance for any world between. There was little of my mother's Ireland in me. No, I was a poet in words, words that rose in my throat and choked me when most I longed to be glib, words for whose beauty I was dumb. I know little of the self I was then, but I do not think I have changed very greatly. Words are still my witchcraft and my doom. You will not have forgotten *Pearl*.

So I came to Charleworth, and put up at the "Red Harry", and crossed the Close to this house to find my master. I forget what year it was, but as I remember, it was a matter of months before the King died, and the young Queen came to the throne. Churchside looked differently then. None of these rows and rows of little chimneys to see from this window in those days, none of the squat cottages, and the five-foot-square brick backyards: only the gardens of three or four big Georgian houses, and the coach-houses of Sir Charles Camber's town residence, and St. Julian's church filling the panes as the ruins of it fill them now. A big church it was, cruciform, with a top-heavy tower in the centre; but very beautiful within. You will have seen it in prints, no doubt. There was glass in the tower worth a king's ransom, but it fell, it fell as kings and their captors fall, into the graves of common men.

The ruts in Julian's Alley were nearly as deep in those

days as they are now, and coaches from London for the North creaked up and down it into the yard of the "Red Harry". Two rows of cottages stand where the stables were then; and there was bustle there morning and night, coaches and cabriolets coming and going, horsemen riding in, farmers for the cattle-market, gentlemen for the season the Cambers made of autumn, and the beauty of the Camber daughters. But I rode down from my hall in the border hills for love of Lavinia, daughter of King Latinus, and Camilla of the Amazons, and Dido, Queen of Carthage; and with no other woman in my heart I crossed the Close from the inn, and let myself in by the garden gate of Providence Cottage, and saw Damaris standing beside the open door.

Lavinia—Camilla—Dido—no, she was none of them. They were dead women in a dead language from the moment that I saw her. She had come from the garden, swinging a bonnet of lace by its ribbons in her hand. It was the summer of the year, and she had roses at her breast; and the sun made two bars of copper across the blue-black of her hair, and the colour came and went in a dusky red under her translucent pallor, so that her veins of crystal seemed to run some ichor of late sunset. I had never seen such a woman. She stood there in her white muslin dress, just tinted with blue, the wide skirts spread over the gravel like a dropped harebell; and she was a chalice of pearl.

A woman, I said; she was eighteen years old, but she was a woman. To me she was all women. I could have fallen on my knees to her, if that would have won her an inch nearer to me; but she came to me with outstretched hand, and said simply:

"I expect you are looking for my father. I am Damaris Ferne."

Now you say that you have seen Damaris; only through my forgetting mind, and after many long years, but you have seen her. But you never heard her voice. Of the two beauties I believe it was the more complete, deep-toned but very soft, so that she seemed to whisper secrets in every word; and so still in its music, so poised in the air as it left her lips, that it was hard to know the moment of its beginning or ending. From her, words had no weight; they floated upon silence as leaves on a stream; and it seemed to me that every time she opened her lips she set a chord vibrating which could never again be stilled; that her own name, as she had spoken it, spoke itself for ever and ever in some world where the music of the worlds is treasured.

This I remember most clearly of all; this, and the kind face with which she received me; and that she did not smile in greeting. And through all these things I remember, too, how I looked up from the hand I had kissed, and saw Harry Belgaine standing behind her.

I did not know him then. He was of about my own age, but not of my make, taller, finer, russet-haired, smiling and ruddy with lust of living, like the beasts of the field. I see him at her shoulder now; whenever I think of her beauty there is the face of Harry Belgaine behind her, for ever young and laughing and sleek with life.

I came to Providence Cottage, sometimes once a week, sometimes oftener, for two years. My studies were long over by then; but Dr. Ferne had begun work on a new verse translation of the *Æneid*, and had asked me to help him with it. I more than understood the dryness of his well, but I stayed, and took up the work eagerly. It was a reason for being near to her. I asked no more.

In this strange house we were a strange household. Dr.

Ferne was not the scholar of my thoughts, but a plump and full-voiced middle-aged business man, with a pride in his wit rather than his holiness, and a faculty of argument which could have reasoned away the wings from the archangels, and their sins from ordinary men. His theology was a matter of having the last word; and he was so steeped in reasons why God must be, that he had forgotten God was. You could have bled arguments from his veins against every heresy of the past and of the day; but Gethsemane and Calvary between them could not have won a single tear from him. There were none to win; he had no emotions. I can conceive of his expounding the scriptures to subdued captives afterwards, perhaps; but carrying a banner on Jerusalem in a Crusade—never! There is a window to his memory in St. Julian's—the new St. Julian's—two panels of the calling of St. Matthew, with a lunette of angels above, dedicated to "the great divine". Perhaps there had been faith and passion in him once, but when I knew him his divinity was no more than a little dried pea in the drum of his logic. It rattled, but there was no virtue in it.

And if he disappointed me, his wife frightened me. There was nothing terrifying about her in any normal way. She was younger than he, and had been beautiful, but when first I saw her she had for years been ravaged by a weakening disease, and could walk only with a stick. The beauty of Damaris was a legacy from her; but in the mother that black and white had become so dry and hollow, so waxen and brittle that she seemed already a corpse. And though she never left the house and garden—or perhaps because she never left them—and although she spoke little, the influence which filled this house was not Dr. Ferne's, but hers; not the spell of the clever and successful divine, but of the silent, wasted, eternally dying

woman. She was terrible. She came, they told me, of a seafaring family, famous for its adventures in love, and war, and storm through many centuries, for its ungoverned tempers, and its beautiful women; and there was a Manchu woman somewhere far back in her strange ancestry. Yet here she sat over her interminable embroidery, with her ivory-headed stick leaning upon the arm of her chair, quite still and emotionless, only her thin white rods of fingers plying. She sat so, many and many a night, while we wrangled over the whole field of life and death; and though she said nothing, I knew that she despised us, not with passion, but coldly, and to the utmost range of her mind, which I think was greater than any of us knew. And I do not know to this day, her doctors did not know, what it was that ailed her; but it was within her body, something which ate her tissues like a grisly vampire child; and sometimes I am sure that she lived in a hell of pain which the inventions of all the fiends could not surpass, never opening her lips when the pangs tore her, despising even our sympathy. And I for one was afraid of her. What else is there to do but fear a person whom you dare not pity?

And in this house, in this world, Damaris had come to flower, God knows how, in that immaculate moon-begotten loveliness of hers. Beauty in its last triumph has often a little of madness in it; there were times when she seemed to me so strange a flower to find in this sultry air that I wondered if she herself was altogether earthly.

As for Harry, he knew her better than I, had known her for several years, and been a companion to her, a weighty balance for all the strangeness of her own household. He was an old student of Dr. Ferne's, a local squire who kept the wolf from a none too rich property by breeding, selling and racing his own horses. He was a

frequent visitor at Providence Cottage; he came when he would, and made free of the house as he would; and he was the more acceptable to Dr. Ferne because he was a materialist, who believed in nothing less tangible than horse-flesh. The argument between them was never done. Night after night it went forward, across the fire in the hall; God or spontaneous chance—immortality or oblivion, while I sat listening over the *Æneid*, and Mrs. Ferne kept her cavernous eyes upon her bony hands at their work, and Damaris——

Did I ever really describe her? Not the face you have seen, not the perfection of features, but the ways which made her Damaris. She was a very still woman. I never knew any other being to sit for so long with her hands folded in her lap, not a muscle of her body moving, rapt, not even thinking. You could be close to her in these hours, could watch her steadily, and she would not know. And so she would sit while her father and Harry between them settled the fate of her soul, staring before her from her shining, heavy-fringed eyes, her mouth curved too faintly to be called smiling, her hands lax in the folds of her dress, dead to us all.

Nor did I speak when she was silent. I could no more bear to be a believer in like fashion with Dr. Ferne than an atheist with Harry Belgaine. Besides, I was twenty-one, and had more reticences than simplicities, and counted my treasure like a miser, behind all my locked and barred doors. But now, now that I have no cheeks to burn for my enthusiasm, no body at all to be embarrassed by the light of someone else's knowledge on my secrets, I dare confess my faith. Confess it? Vaunt it! There never was a moment of my thinking life when I did not know that my Redeemer lived, or doubted that I was immortal. I had no reasoning. Mine was faith, and

faith is knowledge or nothing. And often I wondered what she kept in her heart while Harry laughed his great laugh, and cried down heaven and earth into so much galvanised dust in the palm of his hand. But she said nothing.

Damaris—— brows that severed her face like the span of a gull's wings, and heavy glistening lids under them, and great, shining eyes, and a short, full mouth set tenderly in that face so fleshless and yet so delicately shaped—— No, you never saw her—you never saw her.

Oh, I loved her. How could I choose but love her?

At first, I think for almost a year, so deep asleep was I—at first it was like a religious ecstasy. I knelt in front of her as if before an altar, and wanted only to warm my hands at the vestal fire of her perfectness. It was not even in my desire to touch more than her hand as we stepped from a boat upon the river, her foot as she mounted one of Harry's horses, her arm, perhaps, as we rode. That was glory enough. A year of this, and it was paradise on earth.

We were much together. No one cared what she did. Her father buried himself in the dust of his knowledge like an ostrich hiding its head in the sand. Her mother stared at her doings indifferently through the impenetrable fence of her own pain. And Damaris and I rode together.

One day in the summer after our first meeting, we rode to Caradoc's Camp. We had been together in those seas of grasses many times before; and often she had sat, as she sat that day, with her eyes fixed upon the Welsh hills, their blue sugar-loaf cones spearing the sky far away beyond the glittering plain; with her gloves thrown down in the turf, and the white veil of her hat flaunting in the breeze, and her face under it a mask of black and

white, its doors shut, its curtains drawn. Oh, yes, I had seen her so many and many a time; but suddenly the thought that I was at her side, and she not even aware of me, was like a knife in my heart. I was awake; and where were my worshipping songs now?

I loved her, and she had forgotten that I was there. The pangs began then. When she was ready to return, I mounted her, and sent her ahead, saying I would follow. She left me; and I lay down in the grass and was still as death in my agony, all my flesh become one great pain; for I loved her, and she had looked at the Welsh hills, blue as iris petals, and the waves of the grassy sea a-ripple in the wind, and smiled in a rapture which would not let me in for all my knocking. I lay by the walls of the dead city, and wept for my captivity, and prayed God that there might be no more such pain. One moment of realisation, like a pin-prick—so—and I prayed that there might be no more such pain! Some hundred years ago, or more, at the age of twenty-two. Well, I am here.

From that day, that day on which I carved her name as a memorial, I desired her. With every sense and every faculty of every part I conceived I possessed, body, mind and soul, I hungered and thirsted for her. I had my harvest. All my dreams came home. The very touch of her fingers on my arm as we walked had more cunning to hurt than all the racks of Spain; and yet I could not tear myself from her. There were times when she was away from home, or when I myself had business in London. Then, apart from her, I looked forward with hopeless impatience to the next meeting. At her side again, and that pain in absence seemed to me like a spring of water in the desert by comparison with this agony of her presence. To sleep was to dream of her, to wake was to covet her again with a fresh spasm of perception. At first,

you see, love was my soul adoring her. Now she was not only my mind's idol, but my body's lack also.

But you know all this. I cannot add anything now. I have forgotten what it is to wear a body. And I remember as if with my soul only the slow progress of the second year I spent in Charleworth, the crawling verses of our *Æneid*, Mrs. Ferne's indomitable fingers plying, Harry's russet head loling in the window-seat under the stained glass irises; and everywhere and always, Damaris. Her long white arms full of 'lilac spires, her mouth's rare laughter, the flush and fade of luminous colour under her skin, the incomparable moulding of her cheek-bones, bold and clear in the candle-light at dinner, the little cup of light at the base of her throat, so white that it was almost blue, the hollow between her breasts, where she wore white roses no whiter than her bosom, the light heft of her upon my shoulder and my hands as I mounted her, the glowing lips parted as she rode, her eyes for ever slumbering on the distances I could not see.

So passed the second year.

Why did I never do the simplest of simple things, and tell her that I loved her? There were many reasons, but the greatest was that I knew what my answer would be. I knew my deserts far too small ever to encompass so much as the touch of her mouth in pity. And I dared not, I dared not face that answer, nor its inevitable banishment from the bitter heaven of her presence. Oh, many and many a time I had had the words on my lips, but still they went unspoken. At the final moment I was dumb.

It was on a September evening that this phase came to its end. I had watched her go into the garden to cut flowers; and I could not resist following her to the corner of the house, where the lilacs sheltered me from sight.

I think I spoke her name aloud; and a voice behind me said: "‘Et tu, Brute?’" And I turned, and found myself face to face with Harry Belgaine.

He was smiling, but not as I had ever seen him smile before, his brown lips curled back from his teeth; and though he stood, as I did, in the leaves of the lilacs; I could see the beads of sweat breaking under his brown hair as he said:

"‘And the beast went softly for awe of the goddess.’"

Then I knew that he meant himself, that he knew what his materialism made him to me, a mere piece of comely and lusty flesh. I knew, too, what my own obsession had hidden from me for so long, that he loved her as I loved her, and dreaded the loss of her as deeply. He took me by the arm, and drew me away with him into the orchard; and there we sat down together, strange friends, to make a stranger bargain.

"You believe in a life after death, don't you?" said Harry. "How much are you willing to stake on it? Your life? Your love?"

I said that I was, and it was no more than the truth.

"And I know that I am alive now," said Harry, "and that I shall die, and be dead for ever. I knew it; and like you, I'm willing to stake heavily on it—even to my soul, the soul I don't possess. So you have eternity to reach your happiness, and I have only now—now—*now*——" He drummed his clenched fists into the grass, and then, leaning forward, caught me by the wrist in his hot, shaking hands. "Listen!" he said, "I propose a bargain. Go away from her, do not see her, do not write to her, for a year. Give me one year from to-day, and if by then I have not won her, then come and win her yourself, and may you both be happy. But if I have, then she's mine while I live; and after death, in your

imaginary heaven, you may have her and welcome."

I cried out that he was mad to propose so crazy a bargain. In my way I was as much a materialist as he in his.

"You do not believe in souls," I said.

"No," said Harry, smiling bitterly, "but you do."

I was human. I wanted the hope, even the forlorn hope, of her love on earth. "Why should I," I cried, "agree to give you first chance of winning her?"

"Because you have a to-morrow to look forward to, and I have none; because you have eternity—or think you have—in which to find and conquer her; but I must have her now or never. Think, man, think," said Harry, "What a hell my mind must be, with only death to look forward to, and a few years between in which to make life pay me high. Let us see who has the right of it. I believe in this world, and no other. I wager my love and my soul that there is no other. But you—you who profess faith—— Coward, coward if you shrink from doing as much for your faith. I know now what your faith is worth. If I dare stake heaven for earth, dare not you stake earth for heaven?"

I saw then the long empty road of my life stretching to the horizon, with no Damaris to make it bitter or sweet; and a hundred thoughts went through my mind, mean thoughts that he would fall short of her though I gave him a hundred years, generous thoughts that there was justice in his proposal, even exalted dreams that I would yet take Damaris by the hand before the judgment seat of God. But suddenly all were turned to cowardly fear, fear that I should lose what I never possessed; and I cried out an angry refusal, and tore myself away from him, and rushed back to the house.

Damaris was standing in the hall, her scissors swinging

by a silver chain from her belt, her blue dress brushed with dew, dew on her disarranged hair. The irises shone upon her from either window. There was colour in her cheeks, light in her eyes, and her lips were parted, golden-red, like the petals of poppies. Her arms were full of immortelles; she stroked them with her long hands, and their petals crackled dryly under the touch. Then I saw, then I understood, what Harry feared. They were quite dead, those flowers; in the heaven of her breast, under the caresses of her fingers, no warm sap stirred in them, no heart beat faster. They were in paradise, and they neither knew nor cared. This, then, was his death. Mine? Mine was an eternity of looking upon her face.

I went back to where Harry lay on his face in the orchard grass, and shook him by the shoulder until he scrambled to his knees to curse me. I said: "You shall have your year."

The next day, on a pretext of urgent business, I left Charleworth for my house in Connaught.

XII

THE STORY OF PATRICK MUNDY (*continued*)

THEY were married in August of the following year, at Old St. Julian's.

Yes, she married him. I think there had never been a single moment when I had really believed he would win her. You see, I am honest; so now you will know how to value my generosity. And yet, why shouldn't she marry him? They had always been companions, long before I came into their world; and he had been good for her and good to her, with his overwhelming happy

animalism which was like a rough wind blowing through her sultry life. He was her way of escape. They came here to live in the same twice-breathed air, by her mother's wish; but still I see how he must have been an unfailing ease to her. Yes, she was wise to marry him. It was inevitable that it should happen so.

They sent me an invitation to the wedding; but I did not go. I could not trust myself as yet to look at her and be unmoved. But there in Ireland, with Damaris out of reach, and the isolation of loving her grown round me like a high wall, will you believe me if I say that I was happy? I was happy; for I had all eternity before me, and it was filled with Damaris. In my heart I thanked Harry for showing me that love was not of this world only, that this world held only the least illusion of it. In my soul I already possessed her. Harry's Damaris was the illusion, for I held the reality. And yet there was pain, too. Oh, yes, I was still no more than a man, and still young enough to keep myself from becoming more; and God knows, as I know, that if once I had set eyes on her in the flesh during those years I would have traded all my heavens of the future for one kiss of her mouth.

I did not see her. I did not see her for three more long years—four, that is, from my last meeting with her.

I stayed in Connaught until I dared no longer neglect my border property here. I had a bailiff I did not altogether trust; and after all, my father's house had some claims on me. So I came home as quietly as a thief to my own house, and lived there like a recluse; for I was more afraid of my love now that I was near her. For five months I lived there in my loneliness in the hills, with only twelve miles of clear air between my walls and hers. Then I ran headlong into Harry Belgaine, Harry on one of his best horses, hatless, muddy from a meet, riding

home down one of my narrow lanes in a December twilight.

It appeared that he cherished a kindness for me for giving him his happiness; for he stopped, and leaped down to take my hand, and urged me to ride down into Charleworth with him, and spend the week-end at Providence Cottage. He had reined past me before he realised who I was—for I had changed more than he—and was all the more eager to make amends by forcing me away with him. Well, I had not been tempted until then, but my defences were down in a moment. Why should I not go? I had myself well in hand; more, I was at peace; and there was nothing I desired of her but just to see her face again, to measure her by my remembrance, and to re-dedicate myself to her for ever.

But it was not like that when we reached Providence Cottage. It was not at all like that when we came into your hall in the darkness that evening, into this house where Damaris was. Oh, no, it was not at all the same thing then. My peace—such a precarious peace—all gone like a mist in the sun. I stood in the shadow at the foot of the stairs, for there was no light in the hall but the fitful shine of the fire reflected from every polished surface. I stood there alone, looking up towards the landing, where a sconce held four tall candles, and as many ghosts of candles glittered in the window-panes. Harry had taken my cloak and hat from me. The four years were dissolved in a moment, and I was back in my own place, on my knees to a shrine, a beast going softly for awe of the goddess. I felt my heart fluttering in my throat like a bird in a snare, choking me, strangling my own Damaris, my dream of reality, my true illusion. I see now the black ranks of the banisters doubled below upon the wall, upright and still, the haze of the candles suspended over my head,

the hollowed stairs mounting one above another towards the holy of holies. Do you wonder that I haunt this house?

Damaris was coming down the stairs. She had come out from her room at the sound of the hall door closing, and descended to the landing, beside the candles; and there in the radiance she stopped, staring into the shadow where I stood.

She had changed very little; only I think her mouth seemed to have lengthened its set in her face, and her eyes were deeper in her head than I remembered them; and she was much more a woman in the graces of her dress, more of the fashion, with her sleek hair coiled into curls on the nape of her neck, and emeralds in her ears. She stood there, and her skirts filled the landing with a foam of jade-green, and her bosom above the frothing lace was iridescent like a pearl.

"Patrick!" she said, and came slowly down to meet me, with her hands spread upon the hoops of her crinoline, buried to the wrists in green tulle. I remember now every slur of her silken garments as she came step by step down the last flight of stairs, and the pointed toes of her black silk shoes, and their crossed ribbons circling her insteps. My heart was under her small, deliberate feet. I dared look no higher until I must; but when she stood upon the last stair, facing me, I could not withhold my eyes from her face any longer. And once having looked, at such dizzy distance, once having fastened my soul upon those smoothly-fashioned bones, and those eyes' unawaking sleep, I could not look away. She gave me her hand, smiling, and saying:

"Why, Patrick, I thought you had forgotten us."

Forgotten her! Not the least turn of the last joint of her finger could I forget, not one trick of her voice, nor one fleeting colour of the candle-light upon her hair, nor

a shade of the sound of my name in her mouth. Other things I forgot fully from that moment, the world, and the years of my peace, and the hope of eternity; for the pain was back in me a hundred-fold, and the desire, from that day until the day I died.

Until the day I died! It was not long.

She had changed more than I had thought. At dinner she sparkled, who had sat so often remote from us; she talked gaily and well, she who had been so silent; she laughed much, she whose smile had been so brief and rare. Harry and Damaris! They were the only living things in the room, vivid between my stillness, and her mother's cold, grim scorn, and Dr. Ferne's dry, rattling bones of reason. Harry had always glowed; but her radiance was new and strange to me. I suppose it had been kindled by his.

Well, I had tasted of the juice of the poppy. I was lost. Sometimes I haunted this house in life as I haunt it now, sometimes I buried myself in my own manor, and devoured my heart in absence. I rode with her, I dined with her; once, only once, I danced with her at one of the Camber balls, I had her in the hollow of my arm, against my heart, light as thistle-down, pliant as a willow-leaf, a laughing goddess. The deadly drug grew upon me. Thus for a month, or perhaps a few days more.

Harry was trying to find a purchaser for one of his horses, a brute which had already maimed a man, and narrowly missed killing a stable-boy. Harry could ride him, but he had no mind to risk his neck, not because he was afraid, but because he saw no sense in it. But the thought of the beast being destroyed for lack of a master hurt me, for he was the grandest creature I ever saw on four legs, and not vicious except when his overwhelming pride was injured. I persuaded Harry to let

me ride him once or twice. If you treated him like a gentleman he behaved like one; but he had high standards. I won his good books by keeping my hands and heels from him; but his graces were precarious at best.

I was on him that morning when we rode back from Harry's farm towards Charleworth, and—well, it was all very brief, and my own fault. I do not quite know what did happen.

She was in a dove-grey habit, with only a gauze scarf wound like a turban around her hair, so that the blue-black sheen of it gleamed here and there through the folds. There was a burst of chilly January sunlight upon her easy, grey-gloved hands, I remember, and her mare's roan hide was sleek as the bloom of a peach under it. I had no eyes for anything else.

We had to cross a brook, not much flow of water to it, but steep banks on either side, and trees atop. My brute did not like going down-hill, and fidgeted at the head of the slope; and I suppose I was used to my own hacks, who knew me as I knew them, and that only half my mind could drag itself from the contemplation of Damaris to look at my own life. Whatever the cause, I forgot his sensibilities, and thrust him at it more roughly than his temper could brook; and he stiffened under me, and gave a shriek like an outraged barbarian prince.

The pace had been warm, and as I said, it all happened very quickly. He had a king's bitterness in revenge, he did not mind dying, so that I died, too. He broke me like a twig against a pollard willow—I still hear that crash of my own bones in the rustling leaves—and the two of us went headlong down the slope into the brook-sedges and the mud.

After the avalanche of our falling it was very quiet. The first thing I remember is the icy water of the brook

round my head and one arm, and the taste of blood in my mouth; then the leaden grey of the clouds which seemed close above my face, and a narrow cleft of sun across them like a golden arrow. I was under, upon my back, but in what strange shape else I never knew; and the poor brute was plunging and sobbing across my thighs. I felt little, only a wave of sickness at every struggle he made; for the turf under me lay like a thick sponge over quivering soft mud, and simply swallowed me deeper as he ground me in. I suppose from the waist down I was little better than mangled flesh; but I knew little of it. I remember wondering what it was that gasped and heaved so near to me. I do not think there was much pain; but the first coherent thought I had was that my back was broken.

Harry came plunging to my side, and I was not even aware of him until his face loomed over me, grotesquely afloat from his body, all glaring brown eyes of horror and throbbing arteries. I think he tried to head Damaris away from me; but she was not frightened of anything, and she put him aside, and came to lift my head in her hands from the water. I know little more. Her pity paid every drop of blood, every splinter of bone, with heavy usury. I remember their voices, but none of the things they said, their comings and goings, but nothing which they did. I think it was Harry who rode to the nearest farm and brought help. I know that I rode the last mile to Charleworth in the floor of a farm-cart, with my shoulders raised upon her arm, and her gauze scarf around my head.

They brought me into this room. They laid me on the bed where you are lying now, there in my bloody ruin among the fine linen of their marriage-bed. Oh, no, I had no heart to feel any bitterness then at that thought.

I thought of nothing. My mind floated in paralysis, as my body was numb. I know a doctor came and went, and that the tapping of Mrs. Ferne's stick hovered in the borders of my consciousness; and I know that the hands of Damaris unwound the scarf from my head, and bathed the blood from my face with great gentleness. I could scarcely move my hands, but I caught at hers as it touched me, and clung to it; and she left it in my keeping without a word. I think she was on her knees by me, for her face seemed wonderfully near. I think she wept. I know Harry did.

It was clear to me in the haze of my mind that I was dying. Harry was muttering hoarsely that he had killed me, and Damaris put her free arm round his shoulders, but did not withdraw her hand nor her eyes from me. My mind was clearing now. At a price I had her attention at last. But what a price! For she was still so young, and seemed to me to have so many years upon years of life before her, that if I died and went on my way I might never find her again. What would follow after death I did not pretend to know, except that there would be life, and there must be progress. And if I passed steadily onward, while she was bound here for forty years more, how many centuries would be swallowed up before we came together? I thought of God. He seemed far away, and was infallibly eternal. No, it was of her I must not lose sight; it was from her I must not part. I would stay in the world. When the dissolving moment came I would hold fast by my love's hand, and nothing should sunder us. So little did I trust God, you will say, and it is true; but you never knew Damaris.

All that afternoon I could feel the world receding, and the tug of immortality struggling to draw me away; but I clenched my hand all the more fiercely upon hers, and

bent all the will I possessed upon resistance. It was not easy, for heaven plucked at me with a poignant homesickness; and if she was the only Damaris, yet God had His beauties, too. Somewhere in the room, unseen, Dr. Ferne was reading prayers for me; even from his dry mouth they reached my mind with a piercing loveliness, so that I had to steel myself by the touch of her, by the tick of the clock, by anything which would help me to hold fast time and space. Oh, believe me, it was not without agony that I anchored my soul in her compassionate eyes.

She did not once move, nor turn her face away. I saw her as a moon over me, shining clear through my mists; and I lay hand in hand with her all that afternoon, until the light passed from her white throat, and left her in shadow, and the late chill filled the air, and the winter dusk came. And in the dusk I died.

XIII

THE STORY OF PATRICK MUNDY (*continued*)

THERE are people who will try and tell you that there is nothing awful about death, no pain at all, no more terror than there is in entering an unknown room. Do not believe them. There is pain, all the arrears of pain and fear, perhaps, which belong to our fat and well-fed life. At least it was so with me.

At the last I was filled with fear. I knew that the moment was on me by the sudden fiery cramp which rushed through my body, by the instant lightness of my mind, and the clouds which surged between her face and mine I fought against those clouds with all my will, silently now, not in stupid, wasteful passion, but in a cold

resolution; and I destroyed them, I shrivelled them like an acid, so that I saw her face again clear and pure. Her tears upon my lips stung and strengthened me. And then the pain came, instant and overwhelming. I seemed to be caught in a great wind which struggled to drag the soul from my body; and all the agony I had ever conceived in dreams seized upon me and tore me in one second of time before time ended. I bent my soul against the wind, gathered weight and will behind the hand that held her hand, said her name once in my triumph: "Damaris——"

And it was over.

A great stillness came, and a greater peace, a peace of things done which could not be undone; not for a triumph, not for a defeat, only for something irrevocably finished. I lay in it as if I were buoyant in a calm and illimitable sea, or set like a star between the loftiest nebulae in space. That was my death.

I was still in my body, but its limitations no longer held me, and all its senses were shattered like broken glass. It was an eerie feeling, to be lying there in that coffin of flesh, and not to be conscious any more that its back was broken, that from the stomach downward it was bruised pulp, that its eyes were fast closed, its ears stopped for ever, its voice silent. For I—the one immortal, indestructible I—I was. I had never known what it was to be until that moment when all that was not soul in me had ceased. I had not wagered my love for nothing, I had thrown the present and won the future. I lay still, pitying Harry. Then energy came into me. I looked round, and found the room as before. This room, Julian.

I am telling it all very badly. Words have so little scope. How can they ever hope to describe the moment when I doubled my hands under me into the quilt, and

raised myself from the bed as I had raised myself from my own bed thousands of times before, except that there was now no weight in me; for I rose out of my body as one who leaves an unfastened cloak lying.

I stood in the midst of them, so close to Damaris that I could have touched her; but no one was aware of me. My love was on her knees still, hardly breathing; Harry sprawled forward on the bed beside her, with his face hidden in his arms. Dr. Ferne had ceased to pray, though the book was still open in his hands; and beside him his wife leaned heavily upon her stick, as still as he. For a moment I wondered what miracle held all those spellbound eyes. Then I looked down with them, and beheld my body.

A poor thing it was, now that the grain of God was gone out of it, a poor thing to boast itself as made in His image. Yet it had desired Damaris. That was at least some claim to remembrance.

They all knew that I was dead. Damaris released her hand, and stood up slowly; and I saw that she still carried the scarf of grey gauze with my blood upon it. Poor tender Damaris, she rose so stiffly and wearily from her knees, having knelt so long and patiently. She was haggard of face, and the coils of her hair, loosed by the January wind, hung dark upon her shoulders, and the smooth grey habit was pitifully crumpled now. She passed a hand dazedly over her forehead, and turned from us all to the window there; but in the dark I think she found little ease for her over-tired eyes, only the tower of St. Julian's, top-heavy against the sky. She brushed my arm as she passed me; she felt nothing, no presence, not even the rapture of my love shivering upon the air she breathed. She stood there with drooping head, fingers shadowing her face, and the scarf trailing from her hand.

I saw her now, I saw them all, with a clear but distant vision, as if we were in different airs which touched only in this room; and I think it was this, and the newness and strangeness of even so trusted an immortality, which held my free soul its own prisoner here. I was not afraid, but I was reluctant, to go forth into the old air; reluctant, too, to lose sight of the one proof that I had really been in the world. No, I had not escaped time, nor space, though I was outside them. There were still months to wear away, years to spend in longing. I expected to be lonely. There would be her arms at the end of it.

They spoke of me. Dr. Ferne was loudest in my praise. What is there so laudable about the dead? I was a paragon of virtue, and a phoenix of learning, I with my helpless abstraction from the world, and my lame hexameters from which the Virgilian fire and tears were all disenchanted. Harry—why had I never seen until then that Harry the materialist was also Harry the sentimentalist?—murmured that he had killed the best man and the best friend he had ever known—two superlatives I am sure I had never worn before in his eyes. Even Mrs. Ferne doubled her claw of a hand under her bosom, where the infinite undying death was, the abortion she carried to her own death-bed, and said in a sudden, harsh cry:

“How can you explain it? How can you justify it? That he should be wantonly broken to pieces, he, with his youth, and his strength, and his poetry—while my creaking gate still hangs?”

That was my elegy, and a strange one from her, who had never smiled on me in life but with the dry mockery she sharpened upon us all. But Damaris praised me best in her silence, and in the tears she had shed for me; and much more than these, when at last they drew her

away from me she turned in the doorway, and came slowly back to where my body lay, and kissed with her so deeply-coveted lips the lips which were already growing cold. Then she went away, and closed the door upon my dead body and my living soul, here together in this room.

And in this room I remained for several days, afraid to venture the world again so soon, learning my new, unthirsting, invisible, intangible state before I dared enlarge my few grey yards of loneliness. Sometimes I lay down beside the body they had washed and composed for burial, and measured myself against its unheeding stillness. Sometimes I sat at her writing-desk, and held her funny little quill pen in my hand. Sometimes I amused myself with making verses. Often I watched the rain and the wheeling birds from the window. So far from enjoying an unawaking sleep, as some believe the dead do, I suffered an unsleeping wakefulness.

They buried me on the fourth day, in a very fine coffin with gold handles, and under a mound of flowers. Damaris sent, by Harry, a sheaf of bronze chrysanthemums to lay nearest the casket; but she did not enter my solitude again, nor go with them to the church to bury me. I believe my cousin came late, being delayed by his coach breaking an axle; at least he did not come into this room, and I never saw him.

I watched the funeral from this window. The grave was not far from the wall of the south transept, on this side; that is, in the left corner as I saw it, and farthest from the gate. I watched my own coffin lowered by the slings into the red earth, and the soil shovelled in over it until it was only a raw wound in the green. Afterwards they gave me a stone over it. I go and look at it sometimes. But it does not seem to matter. I am here. That

is only something like a cast-off coat. I never had any great attachment to it. *Requiescat in pace.*

So Patrick Mundy died and was buried. I will not make my story longer by trying to remember details of the next three years. I existed through them in a cloud of loneliness, unceasingly aware of people and things, but rather as persons and scenes of a play in a puppet-theatre than as living beings. They were to me like so many little figures in a pieta, brightly-coloured and full of delight, but not alive, as I, the dead, was alive. Only Damaris kept her stature, her beauty, all her treasure of heart and mind; and was not diminished, but magnified with every moment of waiting I paid for her.

I was not always in this house during those years. I wandered through Charleworth as I would; sometimes I was even in the air above the town. At night particularly I could not rest; for then this room, this canopied bed drew me like a magnet; and I would steal in and behold them sleeping side by side, his arms round her, his bright head lying in the black river of her hair. Sometimes they slept like children, without reserve; sometimes she was like a snow-drift in which he had died, her arms circling him, her face distant and aloof; sometimes they were awake, and talked of the day, of the morrow, of many things and people, even of me. They talked kindly of me.

Nothing disturbed the grey level of my waiting, not even the death of Mrs. Ferne some year and a half after my own. I was not beside her bed. I lived—strange word to use of that state in which I was!—for one death only, and it was not hers.

One other incident I remember. Damaris brought home, soon after my burial, the book in which my songs were written; the book which you have now. I do not

know how she got it; but she came into this room with it concealed under her scarf, and sat at the desk to read it and wept a little, hardly, over the reading. When Harry came looking for her she hid it away quickly in the skirt of her dress. I suppose she could not have him hurt by the tragedy of my love; she could not guess that he already knew more than she of that story. Long afterwards it lay unheeded among the collection of Dr. Ferne's cast-off books which he left in this house; and no one looked at it.

Nothing more troubled my strange peace, until the summer of the third year. Then, in the sultry heat of a week of thunderstorms, Damaris bore a daughter.

She was in labour for a day and most of a night; and the child was born in the early hours of a morning so still that the earth seemed to halt on its axis. The air was like a hot, moist blanket let down over Charleworth; and throughout the night there was thunder rolling along the horizon, and little greedy tongues of lightning licking the edges of the clouds. As for me, I was wandering through the empty streets and the parks all the day and all the night, for I could not bear to be in this house while she bore in obscene agony of the body children who should have sprung living and lovely from the light of her eyes, from the marriage of her voice with the air, from the curve of her wrist as she plucked flowers. I swear to you that I bore no grudge because the child was his; it was simply for her I was angry, that she who had been fashioned like a goddess should be forced to bring her child into the world after the manner of the daughters of men. And that was the only time that ever I had hated God, even for her sake; and I think God will forgive me, for I have loved her second only to Him, and shall do all the days of my immortality.

I stood beside my grave, down there in the shadow of St. Julian's. The lightning was lipping across the sky behind the jagged head of the tower, while I watched the shadow of the midwife passing to and fro like a bat over this lighted window, and presently a second shadow, which was that of the doctor. He had seen my birth into eternity; he saw the child's birth into time.

It was the grey of dawn, the first thin, threatening grey, when I entered this house again. The hall was still; but I heard the child cry above me. Damaris lay like a figure of wax in this bed, staring with wide eyes into the canopy over her. Her hands upon the coverlet were like two dead pigeons beaten down by rain and wind. She did not move. No colour flowed under the opaque cheeks. She was like a mask of clay.

Nor did Damaris rise from her bed ever again. She lived for three weeks, but she did not speak more than a few words, nor seem to notice in any way the heart-broken pleadings of Harry. She simply lay in an unceasing dream, as if her mind had passed before her into a far country. And I think that in the vortex of a whirlpool of grievous sorrows she was at rest, taut and poised, as the pivot around which her father, and Harry, and the child were hurled unceasingly and racked without ending; for sometimes her pale mouth seemed to smile with an unearthly radiance, and her eyes to light softly from within; and then I told myself, with that fantastic presumption I know only too well, that her eyes were espying me afar off in the country to which she journeyed, and her mouth already leaning to my kiss. And oh, but she was exquisite beyond description in those days, my pale, plucked rose—.

I said that she spoke little; but towards the last she said often, in a mere whisper of a voice, but clearly:

"Am I going to die?" Not as if she feared the moment, rather as if she desired it. And Harry would answer her: "No," in a wild cry; but always she asked again.

How can I tell you, then, with what rapture and with what agony I stood at last by her death-bed? This was my hour. I wished to cry out to him to leave troubling her, to remember the compact we had made; but I did not. I had waited so long—three years, oh, God! so long?—for this one hour of meeting; I could wait longer, if need were to the end of three score years and ten. Her father prayed over her his fluent, dispassionate prayers, and committed to her lips the sacrament she could scarcely take. Harry clung by her hands; but I knew that he could not hold her; for she was mine, then and for ever mine. She would come forth from that still body a stranger in a strange land; to them invisible, as foam blown from the lips of the sea, as a wind which cries in the doorways and departs, as a flake of snow melting upon the window of their knowledge; but to my eyes she would appear as a bride in her wedding garments, as my *margeurite*-pearl of the casket of God. And I should take her by the hand, and together we should undertake the joyful journey into Paradise. I do not know that even then I cared or dreamed what awaited us there. I was content it should be heaven; for heaven must be perfect happiness, to every man his heart's best desire.

All this I thought as I watched the ecstasy of her death. For it was an ecstasy. The light of the lamp filled and overflowed from the hollows of her eyes; and ever and again the shining smile visited her lips. The linen over her bosom lifted with so calm and shallow a motion that all we who watched held our breath with the hardly perceptible ebb and flow of hers. She lived through the night in her deepening dream. Harry kept fast hold of

the hands of her body; but I leaned above her beseeching the hands of her spirit, waiting for the moment when I should see her come to me as at the first day, in her new and timeless youth, Damaris at the open door. The minutes slipped by slowly to me, though Harry clawed at them as they passed. The little pulse in her throat fluttered as lightly as a butterfly's wing, slowing, tiring. Twice the breath faltered in her lips, and he thought her gone. But the moment was mine, and I should know it.

Yes, I knew it when it came. A wave of pallid light seemed to sweep over her face, and the heavy lids sank, and hid her eyes; then all her body seemed to shudder with the pang I knew, and her throat contracted once, and she was still. I heard Harry cry her name, and I pitied him. I heard her father piously murmuring the final prayer for the dying, and I despised him. I swooped above her body with open arms, in what a passion of love I cannot tell you; and I gathered to me only the cool, still air, only the faint scent of her black hair, and the vision of her unheeding face beneath, and the bitter, barren light of the lamp; these, and nothing more, nothing more. No soul of Damaris in my arms, no hand folding on mine, no bright face of my lady lifted to my face, nothing of her in the air, nothing of her in that pure, cold casket shrined upon the bed, nothing of her in this world, and in another world, nothing. She was gone, as though she had never been.

As though she had never been. For she never had been.

For, you see, she had no soul. No soul at all.

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XIV

THE STORY OF PATRICK MUNDY (*concluded*).

THEY buried her in the rose-laden July weather in a corner between the yews; and three days from that day there was another storm, and a great wind, and the tower of St. Julian's fell.

It fell in the sunset, while purple clouds broke from the face of a vermillion sun, and all the sky was an angry arabesque of Indian red. They had known that it was becoming unsafe; and the site was already being cleared for the new church. There had been too many coffins let into those thousand-year-old walls, so that that immense weight of tower rested rather upon a few dry bones than upon the true stone of its foundation. But they did not know that its own burial was so near.

I was within it when it fell, kneeling before the little altar in the chapel of St. John, in the north chancel aisle, praying to God to hide me in His heart from the unseeing eyes of Damaris; and I felt the wind catch the shoulder of the tower, one of those long, steady, appalling gusts which find the balance of buildings, and pluck them from their roots. I looked up through the filigree arches into the lofty dusk of the tower, where the priceless windows of Adam of Eldun shone; and I saw the heart of St. Catherine burst asunder in an explosion of glory, and heard the fall of glass like thin screams of pain. From the depths under my feet there began a long and terrible groaning, as the tower swayed upon its pillars, and with a noise like gun-fire a great crack rent the apex of the nearest arch. All the seven panels of Adam, St. Agnes, St. Nicholas, St. Luke, St. Anthony the finder of lost things, St. Monica, St. Christopher,

St. Mary Magdalene—all those gilded heads, all those undulating bodies, all those pale Saxon faces, and brilliant robes, and formal lifted hands sprang together from the stone in a frenzy of scarlet and gold and blue, and descended in a glittering rain of gilded dust. I heard them ring as they fell, like a peal of bells very far away; and in the frames where they had been, only a few jagged edges of colour remained of all that host of heaven.

Then the whole tower seemed to dissolve in showers of choking dust; and always there was the groaning, as of fiends tormented; so that I scarcely knew when the first stones fell. I know only that I crouched on my knees before the altar in the north chapel, and could not even pray for my despair. God had withdrawn His face from me, and this was the symbolism of it. Strange vanity to take to myself so monstrous a rebuff! I am wiser now. I know that St. Julian's fell because of the neglect of men, not by the anger of God.

But the north chapel stood. Not a stone of its fabric cracked, not one flower in its carving was broken; and before its unviolated altar I knelt, while the tower crashed southward and buried the body of the church in its ruins, and ever and again more masonry fell, and more pillars gave under the weight of stone; and the dust of centuries hung all the while shimmering upon the crimson air. I had sought a sanctuary; I fled from a desolation. The sentence of my own choice was upon me. I had said I would stay in the world; and now I knew no way of escape. It was true beyond my thought; I should stay in the world for ever.

They hastened the building of New St. Julian's, and built also a new vicarage beside it; and in time Dr. Ferne removed there, leaving only Harry and his daughter here at Providence Cottage. Henriette grew into a tall girl,

like her mother before her, and had the eyes of Damaris, but her face was Harry's face, broad and passionately handsome, with masses of thick, red-brown hair as a frame. She married beneath her, I believe, or at least Harry thought so, for they quarrelled over the match, and she left him in anger, and never came to Providence Cottage again. And Harry lived to be old and lonely; and old and lonely he died.

Other tenants came after him, but none of them stayed. I spoke to some, some I touched, imploring one word of fellowship out of the long silence. But they all ran from me. To them the house was haunted; nothing more. The rest of my story is only slow, sad year following year, to this year of gold in which I am now, here in your presence.

When I saw that I had built my heaven upon an illusion, I remembered how beautiful was God, and turned in desire to find Him. But the doors of heaven were closed; for I had withheld myself when they opened for me, and they open only once. I am here, and for ever. It is not God's fault.

Between eastern stars and western stars, from north to south of the universe, there is no Damaris. For me there is no heaven. I have only, in all immortality—for you see there can be no time—you, Julian Sears.

And that is all my story.

XV

MONDAY MORNING

JULIAN sat up abruptly, as if some sound had awakened him without warning. The square of the window was becoming faintly grey, all its diamonds

limpid towards the dawn. He struggled to contain his mind, for it seemed strangely light and fluid, and the thoughts within it hunted each other wildly from his notice. The darkness had subtly ceased to be entirely dark; there was positive colour and form in it now; and strangely he was troubled less by the vacant space from which the voice of the story-teller came. He wanted to say so many things that for the moment he could say nothing. The silence waited, tranquilly.

"Damaris!" said Julian softly. "Yes, you've succeeded in making her the beginning and end of your story. I see her very clearly. I'll believe you loved her. But as for knowing anything about her, you never did. Curse you, you never took the trouble to find out anything. I—and I'm divided from her by a hundred years—I know more of her than you do. Oh, I know," he said impatiently, though there had been no protest, "you've described her so well that I can see any number of pictures of her now, at this moment. But that's so little to know about a woman. Anyone, a stranger passing in the street, could have told me how beautiful she was. But you—you who say you loved her so deeply—is that all she is to you? A pair of long brows, and a coil of black hair, and so much white flesh? Is that what you loved?"

Between his face and the stealthy light which clung like the feathers of doves at the window, no sound stirred. The silence was too great to be borne; for suddenly some intense wave of sympathy seemed to flash between them, as if the living truth bound them together from that moment. Julian stared at the grey panes steadily brightening, and saw Patrick's head bowed into his arms in a desolation of despair. "Oh, God," he thought, "what have I said?" and launched himself across the room with no

other thought in his mind but to repair what he himself had helped to break.

"Don't listen to me. I didn't mean to hurt you, you know I didn't." The touch of that substance of the spirit no longer aroused in him any repugnance or fear; he felt only the fierce, frustrated tenderness he had for sick flesh as his arm closed round the bowed shoulders. It was a man he held; only, and this was the absorbing and terrible part of it, it was a man whose senses he felt with his own body, as if he were a lute being played. The quiet room seemed suddenly full of wars and wounds, and the suffering and the warfare both were in his own heart. It was like handling the sheer stuff of human feeling, and becoming himself infected with its quivering sensitivity.

"You are right to reproach me," said Patrick Mundy bitterly, "but do you think I haven't reproached myself over and over, until the sting is gone from the whip? You must find another goad, Julian."

"I didn't mean to reproach you. I wasn't trying to goad you. What am I to say? Don't you see there's nothing I can say to you? Nothing with any reality in it, or any comfort. But I—I'd do anything for you. You must believe me."

"I do believe you." The voice was calm again, and the high tenor tone of it rang soft under Julian's anxious face. "I'm sorry. I've dragged up ghosts to frighten myself, like a child in the dark. But after all, that's all I am. And at least I can't drag up any more now. The pit's empty. You're very patient, Julian."

"I need to be, for, you see, I've got nothing to offer you, nothing. Unless you'd care to take from me—what I've no right to give you—the assurance that you'll find your way out of the world in the end. It takes some—I

was going to say courage, but I'll call it effrontery—to swear that to you; but I do swear it. I'm as sure of that mercy as I am of my own survival. You see," said Julian, in a very clear and careful voice, "I believe in heaven as something ultimately outside all laws; and there isn't a human creature in this or any other century that I could bear to see shut out of it in the end—or, for the matter of that, an animal, either. I don't pretend to know what it is, or how long it's going to take us to be fit to enter it; but I know we shall enter it. I think of it as a state of mind, all things to all men." He drew a deep breath. "If I sound didactic, forgive me; and remember, I'm with you in the dark, not inside preaching over the wall. What if you did cut yourself off? Broken communications can be mended. They will be mended. It's a promise. Not by any virtue of mine, or perhaps even of yours, but they will be mended. You've got to believe that."

"After so many years," said Patrick Mundy dryly, "do you think that will be easy?"

"No, I don't. Why should it be easy? Who wants everything made easy? I want to think myself equal to anything this world or any other can do to me. It wants only the thought; the power is there."

Patrick Mundy said: "I think you can make me believe anything, if I have you near me for long." And then Julian felt his arm enfolded in that long and nervous hand, an impulsive touch which brought him comfortably back to earth. He looked down, and for a moment could not understand what had taken his eyes, why he had expected to see a hand like his own. Within the circle of his arm there was nothing; he remembered then that for a moment there had been something. His sudden, aware stillness reached Patrick, who asked sharply: "What is it?"

"Do you realise what happened then? I saw you. Only as an outline against the window, and only for a second, but I did see you. What does that mean?"

"I don't know. I suppose we have drawn nearer together. What your scientists would call a sympathetic illusion."

"Then I shall see you again," said Julian, with conviction. "There'll come a time when I shall be able to see you constantly, though no one else will know."

"Does it matter?"

"Yes. It matters that I shall have every particle of you, as if you were myself. I have never felt about anything on earth as I do now about you; and we have only begun to understand each other." He hesitated for a moment, and then sighed abruptly: "I wish——"

"Well, what do you wish?"

"I was going to say, I wish you had gone to someone else. But that's not true. I wish I were more capable of helping you."

"You have helped me. Do you think it means nothing to me that you dare talk the night out with me, that you're not afraid to touch me, even? There's no treasure in the earth by which you can over-value yourself to me now, Julian."

Julian turned his face to the window. His heart felt light and confident, all difficulties falling away before its unreasonable happiness; and his mind was light also, but in another fashion, so light that its thoughts floated like so many winged seeds, and he could capture none of them. He kept his arm closely about the shoulders of his friend, for realisation was keenest when they touched. The light grew faintly warm before his face; the sun was rising.

"I can't think in here," he said restlessly. "There are too many other people influencing me; I always felt that.

Wait while I dress, and we'll go out in the garden together."

He dressed hastily. The chill white dawn flushed slowly in the horizontal rays of a sun still half hidden, and presently a native radiance in every glistening surface in the room picked up the rosy hesitant light and magnified it, so that the air seemed all one spacious mirror.

"Put your hand on my shoulder," directed Julian, as they went down the stairs, "so that I shall always know you're there." He was obeyed instantly; the touch was familiar now, and kind as an old friend's.

At the landing beside the window, where a gush of light filled the lifted bowl of the dark, they halted for a moment, in the steps of Damaris and Margaret. The air was suddenly laden and fragrant with them both, as if their souls also were there in hiding, wreathed in each other's arms. Julian struggled to grasp the thistle-down of his thoughts; but there emerged only a sense of nostalgia for Margaret. He said:

"How this place has changed, now I know that you are in it! I wonder if *she* felt you, that first day. I can believe that now. There were times when I felt that this house was too full of memories ever to find room for ours. I used to think, even, that it had become a personality in its own right, and was hostile to us; but I know now that that was an illusion. There were too many moods in it. I understand better now. They were all of them reflections of you and your fellows, not of any soul in the house itself."

In the hall the irises flowered in raging purple, but the foot of the stairs was lost in an aisle of darkness. They passed through the door into the garden, and emerging from the shadow of the house walls, came into the orchard's wet aisles laced with light. It was a morning

drowned in dew. The stirring of the trees shook storms of tears over Julian as he bent his head under the low branches; and his feet left darker trails in the sage-green grass; but wherever the sun threaded its long ribbons of gold every leaf was a-quiver with shining drops, like a child's laughter. They came to the edge of the trees, and climbed the orchard wall; and from the summit of it they saw, before them on the left hand, the steep slope of Churchside going down terrace by terrace to the river, an incredible landscape like earth lifted to heaven, a raft of smoke from many chimneys above, a lake of iridescent mist below. The sun had already reached the water, and drawn from it silver clouds of incense, so that the valley flowed thirty feet deep with a shining flood, blue beneath its heart, rose above. Out of that radiant dimness the steep little jumbled roofs of Churchside sprang abrupt and magical, one above another, angular with light and dark, too vivid and far too still to have any reality outside the grotesque fairyland of a Dürer etching. Hundreds of thin grey stems rose wavering from the chimneys, to flower against the sky in transparent umbels of blue. Over all this wizardry of morning the silence was profound.

"Did you ever see anything so exquisite?" said Patrick Mundy.

"Or anything more damnable! It looks beautiful now, I grant you; but what is it really, under all that colour and mist?" Julian pointed downward, where the hidden river flowed. "The River Walk—there must be something like four hundred houses along there altogether; most of the gardens are covered by mid-November; if there's much snow the downstairs rooms flood round about January, and they have to get out and live as best they can until the river lets them have their homes back. Not just one year, but every year, they live with their eyes continually

on the weather and the water-level, ready to grab their children and run for it. Testament Road—people don't go down there at night if they can help it, but I've been more than once. It isn't a model street, any more than a moral one. There isn't a house in it fit for human beings to live in; but round about two hundred and fifty human beings do, in company with a good many more rats, mice, lice and cockroaches. The children play in the open gutters; there's nowhere else for them to play, except the refuse-pits. Sometimes two families, sometimes more, share a house. And then our welfare workers are shocked to find that nobody knows quite whose children some of them are."

Julian shook himself, and smiled, and sighed a little ruefully. "I didn't mean to deliver another sermon. I was just thinking that there's something symbolic about this—about you and me sitting here, with Providence Cottage behind us, and the foul part of Churchside in front." He turned his head and looked at the westward face of his house, still idyllically lovely and peaceful in shadow, its eyes closed. "That is far too much our place, stamped with our thoughts, to offer us any help now. I said I understand it better, and so I do, but I love it less. It's too old, and has seen far too much emotion, and far too little honest action. Have you ever thought what a force we let loose on the world just by feeling intensely? I hate the thought of measuring the experiences of living creatures by air-waves, as some people would say I am doing. But how could a pain like Mrs. Ferne's pass in silence, and leave no impression behind? Or a grief like yours? Or a strangled beauty like the beauty of Damaris? Those are the ghosts I felt when I came in here. It gives a house a certain fascination; but its power thrown away which could have been used in better ways.

I want no one to spend sleepless nights, a hundred years from now, in sensing any discontent, any jealousy, any loneliness of mine. If I can leave them some happiness, so much the better. And have you thought, Patrick, that if spiritual experience builds itself a lasting house here in the world, perhaps we have added a room to this one?"

The hand upon his shoulder tightened, but Patrick Mundy said no word.

"But all this is energy and power turned inward upon itself; and I wonder if we haven't, all of us, really got hold of life by the wrong end. We ought to be looking outward at other people, not inward at ourselves. It isn't a matter of self-sacrifice, it's a matter of self-forgetfulness. The greatest panacea we have in the world is to forget ourselves in someone else. Turn your back on Providence Cottage; it can't help us." He turned his own and sat with crossed feet swinging and drumming softly against the wall, looking down into the fiery crystal of the river valley.

"I trust you utterly," said Patrick. "Tell me what I am to do."

"Just to stay with me, to go down into the misery of this handsome town with me, and pity these people more than yourself. Do you remember the Ancient Mariner, and how he broke his spell? 'I blessed them unaware.' Unaware is the motive word. I should think the surest way of escape from the world is to cease to be aware of captivity. But I forgot," said Julian, "you wouldn't know about the Ancient Mariner."

"You can tell me."

"Better, you can read it for yourself. I've got a Coleridge upstairs. Will you try my cure?"

"I'd do anything you tell me to do. Besides, you're offer-

ing me the one thing I want and need most in the meantime—your friendship.”

Julian was suddenly filled with panic. The soundless morning began to stir into music at last, with hum of newspaper vans ringing down from Queen Street through the still air, with the distant thrum of motor-cycles carrying men to work, and the crisp tapping of milk-round ponies, and the clang of dust-bin lids. The rhythm of the world beat out of tune to Julian. He reached up a hand which shook a little, and clenched it over the hand upon his shoulder.

“But remember, I’m only a man. I can’t promise anything. I wish to God I could! I’m not sure of anything, except that there will be a way home for you—there must be.” The tremor ebbed from his voice; he said more quietly: “We malign love so much by narrowing it, and making jokes and cheap songs about it, and applying its name to all sorts of loathsome things; but it’s still the greatest force in earth or heaven. That’s why I’m so sure that in the end we can’t fail—because love is with us.”

“My love for her? Is it of that you are thinking? What can I do with all my love?” cried Patrick Mundy bitterly.

“I was thinking of God,” said Julian.

XVI

OLD ST. JULIAN’S

MARGARET had half-expected to be put off again, either to Caradoc’s Camp or some cinema in the town; but all through Wednesday morning the telephone was silent. She took an early train, and was in Charleworth by two o’clock, to find lunch still waiting, and Julian out.

Mrs. Philbin let her in. Her face fell at sight of Margaret, for she had already kept Julian's lunch hot for an hour and a half, and felt an artist's distress for a neglected masterpiece. However, Margaret could at least serve as a safety-valve.

"If you ask me," said Mrs. Philbin, "it'll be a good job when you're here to look after him, miss, for he won't do it for himself. This is the third time in a week he's been an hour late for his lunch, and me waiting to get off to my own work. Oh, it's all right," she said, seeing Margaret frown. "Dora's gone to see to her father; but it's a bit of a nuisance, all the same, with her little girl on her hands as well. The two boys are at school, thank heaven, for they're more trouble than they're worth. And the doctor being late throws me behind; I've missed the shops sometimes through it. He always says I shouldn't have waited, he can look after himself when he's late; but I don't care to let him."

"I'm sure there must be a good reason," said Margaret. "It isn't like Julian to keep you waiting for nothing. Sick people can't wait, unfortunately. And I really don't see," she smiled, "how I'm going to wish him in and out at regular hours even when we're married. You couldn't fix Julian with glue, if someone was ill and needing him."

"Oh, I'm not complaining of him. Nobody could be more considerate, I'm sure. It's just the aggravating way things happen," said Mrs. Philbin comfortably, with the philosophy of those who have never had money enough to buy convenience.

"But there's really no need for you to stay, now I'm here, Mrs. Philbin. You go on home and I'll look after the lunch."

"It's not really any trouble," said Mrs. Philbin, but with a gratified eye upon the clock.

"But I'm staying in any case, so what's the use of wasting your time? I'm quite capable of serving lunch and washing up afterwards, too; and next time Dr. Sears offers to do it himself," said Margaret, laughing. "I should let him. It will be good practice for married life."

Still happily protesting, Mrs. Philbin departed, trotting broad and black across deserted Eden Close, to vanish into the narrow mouth of Red Harry Passage like the apparatus of one of those familiar conjuring tricks which defy the laws of capacity. Margaret stood in the doorway and watched her go. The gravel path and the lawns had been tidied now, and the garden was taking shape day by day. Margaret thought of Julian, wreathing her finger-tips into the gilded letters round the porch. "Peace be within our walls—and plenteousness within our palaces." There was a thin coating of dust over the ledge of the lattice; she wrote her name in it with an idle finger—Margaret Godber. Margaret Godbeer it would have been a century ago, and two centuries before that, in the Puritan fashion of her stock, Margaret God-be-here. She turned back into the hall and looked round her in a sudden feverish joy of possessing and being possessed.

"God-be-here!" said Margaret, spreading her hands lovingly along the black polished door-posts. "Here—in this house. Do you understand now, walls, what your duties are?"

She took her rolls of folk-weave to one of the alcoves in the hall, where the little plots of coloured light shimmered like running water; and there upon the book-table, in the shadow of a bowl of over-blown roses, lay the book of Patrick Mundy. She turned the pages slowly between her fingers, for the fascination of that brittle, dead paper and passionate script had never palled upon her. The covers held a life, much of it familiar to her now,

a perfect story even in the fragmentary glimpse she had of a few lines in the centre of each right-hand page as it turned.

*"—and touch your hand,
Wherein my adoration lies
No greater than a grain of sand."*

*"And your smile gleams
Across the hills of shade,
A star which cannot fade."*

*"Look where I will, I cannot lose your eyes;
Turn where I may, your face is with me still."*

*"My heart takes fire
To see you gather and kiss
Unheeding roses,
And set them in the heaven of my desire;
Roses, that die and never know their bliss——"*

*"No, no, write no more songs, be silent ever,
She does not hear——"*

*"Nor can the night deliver,
Nor the day,
My soul from this despoiling river,——"*

*"There I shall find you, love you there anew.
This I believe. They call it heaven: how
Can it be heaven, if I have not you?"*

*"But God looked down, and said: 'Let be.
Their meeting hands embracèd Me——'"*

She fluttered the last page, and had the book half-closed before she saw that something had been added to the few blank pages at the end. Only the pattern of black and white caught her eye at first, and she turned back hastily for a more exact sight of something which had certainly not been in the book when it came into her possession. It proved to be a sonnet, written in blunt pencil which malformed the script, so that she could call it nothing more accurate than an erratic, sloping hand; a description which fitted Julian's writing, though she could not think of any reason for Julian to write sonnets in the back of her book. There was something about the hasty continuity of the words which troubled her deeply, a certain resemblance, unless she was hypnotising herself into imagining it, to the passionate speed of Patrick Mundy's own century-old writings. She read it through slowly.

*Too-long-enduring, duskless, dawnless day,
Be lifted from the windows of my sight,
And let fall softly as the seaward light
Over the fading sails of faraway,
The promise of the night for which I pray.
Let there be dreamless sleep, rest from the fight,
Healing for wounds, and waking, life set right
From clay and all the doubts and dreads of clay.*

*Let there be silence, and when dawn appears,
Voices before me, never sound behind;
Let there be no more moments, no more years,
No doubt of heart, nor troubling of the mind.
True pilgrimage of heaven, at last begin;
Great Heart of God, open and let me in.*

It seemed to Margaret completely irrelevant to both Julian and Patrick Mundy. There was no place for it in her, experience, and her mind in all its wanderings could find no niche into which it fitted; and suddenly a coldness which was not fear settled upon her. She was still standing there with the book open before her upon the table when Julian came up the gravel path from Eden Close, and halted full in the doorway.

The sense of strangeness which had fallen on the room seemed to have infected even Julian; for though he had swung across the gravel at a good speed, he stopped dead at sight of her; and his face could not mask its astonishment or—she found it difficult to decide this last quality—its apprehension. Most disturbing of all, he raised his hand instantly to his shoulder and clenched his fingers there for a moment in an unaccustomed gesture, as one touches a confederate's arm to enjoin silence. There was something abnormal about the clarity of Margaret's mind. The pencilled sonnet had pricked it; this movement of Julian's stabbed, and she had fixed its just interpretation before his hand had fallen. She did not believe it, for how was it believable? But like a sensitive machine she recorded it; and from that moment they stood apart, on different ground.

The strangest part of it was that all the uneasiness which she had observed in him at Caradoc's Camp was gone. He looked tired, but happy and at ease, once that instinctive gesture was past.

"Margaret! I didn't know you were going to be so early, or I'd have done my best to be here to meet you."

Nothing could ever reduce for Margaret the pleasure she had in seeing him for even so much as a moment; but it was discomfiting to be aware in the same instant of the thought: "Yes, I expect you would; and this would

have been somewhere safe out of sight." She did not resent his keeping secrets from her; she regretted only that he should think it necessary to hide things from her for fear of the questions he should have known she would not ask.

She closed the book and pushed it from her: "Yes, I came by the twenty past one train. Mrs. Cator was out, and I'd nothing to do." She crossed the room into his arms and raised her face.

"I shouldn't, dear," said Julian, laughing. "I haven't shaved yet." But Margaret kissed his forehead, standing on tiptoe and drawing his head down to her.

"Late getting up?" She studied him closely with her wide and candid eyes; the sun, edging out of fleeting clouds, found the honey-coloured tendrils of hair round her temples, and Margaret's crown was on. "You look sticky-eyed and tired, my dear. What's the matter? Sure you're not working too hard?"

"As a matter of fact, I haven't been to bed. I expect I do look stale. I've been up all night with a baby case. Had rather a lot of trouble, but we managed. I'd only time to rush home and have a bite before surgery. I'll go and tidy up." He looked round. "Has Mrs. Philbin gone?"

"Yes, I sent her home. There was no need for her to wait any longer. Now hurry, Julian."

Julian hurried. In ten minutes he came running down the hollowed stairs and into the dining-room, freshened but still haggard. Margaret tried to wait on him, but he protested.

"Sit down, darling, where I can see you, and let's talk." They talked, and he saw her. He saw the sun lying like gold upon the peak of hair on her forehead, and the wide brown eyes lingering wise and frank upon him, and the sleek brown ends of hair falling forward over her cheeks as she bent over the scarcely-begun curtains: he

did not see the unresting activity of her mind. They talked of many things, but not of the book upon the table in the hall, nor of Julian's wary front, nor the instinctive touch of his hand upon his shoulder, nor any of the things which chilled Margaret's heart; but every sentence on every subject ran in her head to the cadence of a couplet of poetry:

*True pilgrimage of heaven, at last begin;
Great Heart of God, open and let me in.*

It could not be Julian's. It was impossible that it should be Julian's. She was sure of that now; and the deadly curiosity she had never known fell upon her instantly. She had known him keep things from her because they were not great enough to be shared; but never because they were too great.

*True pilgrimage of heaven, at last begin;
Great Heart of God, open and let me in.*

Not Julian's words, nor Julian's thoughts, even if he had had the bent for putting his ideas into verse. Julian's pilgrimage was very much of the earth as yet, and he was too direct ever to pretend otherwise even for the sake of a poem. Margaret, goaded by the unimaginable distance which seemed to separate them, did what she had never done before; she called attention to a matter he had put aside.

"Julian——"

"Yes!"

"Who wrote that poem in the back of my book?"

"Which book?" said Julian, driven into a mistaken attempt to be casual.

"Patrick Mundy's book, of course. You know I meant that one."

"Oh, that thing!" said Julian. "I did. I was trying to copy our Patrick's style of thought, but I'm afraid it isn't very good. I scribbled it," he said mercilessly, driving one feeble lie home with others more circumstantial, "in a fury of inspiration, with the script pencil I use on my travels; so now you know what dispensers in this district have to put up with. I'm sorry now that I spoiled the page."

He met her eyes squarely, and smiled. Margaret knew much more now. She knew, indeed, all that was of any importance. She knew that he had lied to her as engagingly as he told truth, and that he could and would do as much again if she pried further. She had already gone far outside her nature in questioning him when he did not wish to be questioned. The secret, whatever it was, grew large in her eyes.

"Oh, I see," said Margaret lamely; and again, with more composure, and far more truth: "Oh, I see!" There were now two courses open to the Margaret he knew; she could either put the whole thing out of her mind; or she could say at once: "Julian, you're telling me lies, and we both know it, and I want to know why." This Margaret divided her will, and did neither with any decision. She did not mention the matter again; but she did not once cease to think of it, either that day or for many more days.

It was she who later suggested a walk, and she who, when they reached the rusty iron gates of Old St. Julian's, wondered if they might go inside and look at the church itself, or what was left of it in its jungle of flowers.

"Could we? I should like to see what it was really like in its prime, and I dare say they'd let us. They tell me

this vicar at New St. Julian's has held services sometimes in the part that's left, so it must be safe."

"Yes," said Julian, "as a matter of fact I believe he's had part of the standing walls chained. If you like we'll go up to the vicarage and ask for the keys."

It seemed to him, as they turned in the direction of the new vicarage, a most opportune chance that Margaret should have suggested the visit. But it was not of her he was thinking, though her hand swung lightly in his as they walked; for the hand of Patrick Mundy, absent since that touch upon it in the hall doorway, had fallen upon his shoulder with an instant eagerness, and lay there with long fingers clenched, urging him forward like a hasty wind.

Euan Pryce was not to be found in the vicarage or the church. They might, said his housekeeper, find him among the children of Queen Street Council School, who played cricket at this hour.

They followed her directions, and found a threadbare patch of grass in another and quieter close. Here the pitch was carefully marked out, the wickets bright yellow in stump and bail, the bat blond and polished, the ball brilliantly adequate in reddest of leather, as became the equipment of a Charleworth Council School. It was all rather like a vision of their entry into Eden Close; for the scene was peopled with underfed ten-year-olds from Churchside, volubly offering advice and encouragement in chorus; and the quiet walls which bounded the field had the same detachment, and the air the same calm. It was as if they entered from another angle the same room in their lives; but now they walked three abreast, instead of two.

Euan Pryce, with an old felt hat tilted over his eyes, was standing at the edge of the pitch, demonstrating a

spin-bowler's wrist-action, with the aid of a stone, to a ring of little boys. A very youthful schoolmaster, newly despatched from a comfortable training-college to acclimatise himself as best he could to these imps of the back streets, watched him with an interest no less than theirs. Margaret, who saw as a stranger, saw clearest. She recognised in Euan Pryce someone who could and did knit together in his own person the little boys and the grown-up boy, the old houses and the new school, even Julian and herself. He was not, and took no trouble to be or to avoid being, in any way noticeable; nor by any scheme was he to be classified; but Margaret saw him as a kind of highest common factor of all classes and kinds, a man who could be set down in any company, and fit like a piece of a jig-saw puzzle securely into the pattern. She liked the weathered brown of his face, and the way he deferred to the young master, and the wrinkles which broke round his eyes when he raised his head and saw them approaching, and the tenor of simple equality which marked his dealings with the boys. She liked, too, when Julian introduced them, the easy lean hand in which he swallowed her fingers.

"So you want to have a look at Old St. Julian's," said he. "Well, it's still worth looking at, if you can get through the jungle to it. It used to be rather a struggle, until I had a path cleared to the north door; so I should go in by the gate from Hilmer Street, if I were you. The keys are at my place; shall we walk up and get them?"

He withdrew himself from the circle of his admirers, not without difficulty, waved his hand to the young master, and led the way back to the vicarage. The keys were in the lowest drawer of a bureau in his study, pushed into a corner behind a collection of books and papers, bits of Etruscan glaze and red terra-cotta from Caradoc's Camp

and other local remnants of Rome, and bundles of prints of stained glass, cut from various magazines of art. He dragged them out from their eyrie, a bunch of perhaps eight or nine keys, tied together with an inadequate string, so that they bristled in every direction as he held them up to the light. Three of them were massive and coloured, though not corroded, with rust; with bows elaborated in leaf and scroll long since tarnished, and shafts decorated with trailers of vine. The remainder were new and small beside these relics, and would have looked out of place had the bunch been flourished by any other hand; but Margaret thought there could be nothing in human life to which Euan Pryce would not seem relevant.

"This big fellow," he said, flicking out the longest of the keys, "is getting on for seven hundred years old. He was one of four, cut by the Benedictine brothers in the thirteenth century, all of different patterns, one for each door of the church; this—opportunistically enough—happens to be the north key. These other two were copied from records, by a locksmith in the town, by order of Queen Elizabeth, after the originals had been destroyed at the Dissolution. There were three copies made, of course,* to complete the set again, but one of them was lost; so the south door, before it ceased to exist, opened to this comparatively modern item here. I've tried my hardest to make Sir Charles Camber realise that there should be a new lock fitted to the north door, so that we could keep this bit of history where it should be by right, under glass. But so far there's been no result. When I've time and money I'm going to get it done myself. But then," he added, with a rueful smile, "when I've time and money I'm going to have everything done to Old St. Julian's, the ruins cleared, the churchyard tended, the windows repaired. Only, it won't be yet."

Julian took the keys in his hand, and singled the Benedictine relic with an inquisitive finger. There was something like three-quarters of a pound in weight of metal in it, and he counted twelve rings of the vine along its shaft.

"Were these leaves plated once? Here and there you get a sort of rough gleam, as if they'd been scraped with a knife."

"They have, by some of the Camber ancestors, in Henry's train. They were coated with gold; not pure gold, I suppose, but pure enough to be worth Henry's while. Oh, yes, I called it a bit of history, and so it is. The records of Old St. Julian's are fairly full and well-preserved. That key saw Adam's windows set in, and one of them broken next day by one of the brothers, in what I take to have been an epileptic fit, though the records call it a possession of devils. It saw an abbot murdered in front of his own church door. It saw the entire building stripped, and the brothers turned out into the streets, with their holy documents and their tools under their arms. And much more besides. But you want the keys and a free hand, not a lecture from me."

"I should like the lecture, too, some time," said Julian. "I'm deeply interested in Old St. Julian's, you see; after all, I live in constant companionship with it, so I may as well take the trouble to get to know it well. Those Adam windows, for instance——"

"Who was Adam?" asked Margaret, raising her grave eyes from the key.

"A fourteenth-century artist in stained glass. He belongs to our own Charleworth; and until the tower of Old St. Julian's fell, and destroyed most of it, we had by far the best of his work here. The tower was rather unique in its design, arched up a full twelve feet above

the rest of the roof; and the Adam windows were set in the four walls at the top, so that they could be seen from every way, and caught every shade of light all through the day. They must have been worth seeing. There were eight of them; two larger than the rest were set, St. Catherine in the south wall, St. Luke in the north; three panels of St. Agnes, St. Nicholas and St. Antony of Padua were in the east; three of St. Monica, St. Christopher and St. Mary Magdalene in the west."

"And they were all destroyed?" asked Margaret.

"Every one. But if you'd like to come in on a secret, I don't mind telling you I've hopes of restoring one of them some day. The St. Luke. You see, he was in the north wall, and when the tower fell it fell southward, leaving a broken edge behind. The window was broken, of course; if the tension hadn't smashed it the noise would have done; but it stood. There was roughly two-thirds of the glass left in the frame, and quite a lot more has been collected since. I want to have all the rubble cleared from under it, but it will take a considerable sum to pay for it. Still, I mean to do it. Even one Adam window will repay any trouble I can take; and the one I'd choose is the St. Luke. Do you know the genre? I expect you do—St. Luke painting the Virgin. It used to be the banner of the painters' guilds, though I don't know how much foundation there is for supposing he ever did paint such a picture. Would you like to see some of my fragments?"

He opened a chest which stood under his study window, and revealed the relics of St. Luke. While most of his possessions lay in casual untidiness, these were wrapped in sheets of cotton-wool, and handled as if they were morsels of the True Cross.

"Some day you must examine these at leisure. But at

least I'd like you to have some idea of the fascination this glass has for me. I think you'll feel it just as strongly. Look, this is the Saint's hand." He spread before them an irregularly-shaped piece of glass in a nest of cotton-wool. "He was a travelled man, was Adam. He'd been in Flanders, according to record; but I can see equal reason for thinking he'd been in Italy, too. Look at his line." He laid the bundle upon the table, and withdrawing the precious wafer in his finger-tips, held it up to the light.

A fragile line it was, but so simply rounded that its fragility became strength. The poised hand, no larger than a child's, had a delicacy impossible to flesh, with fingers too long and too slender, almost fluid in their inarticulate beauty, touching but not holding the brush, as if the wish of the mind controlled it in mid-air. The colours were as fresh as in their first youth, the flesh tints of a dazzling pearly pallor, the edge of the sleeve intensely blue.

"It is like a Flemish hand," said Julian, "but surely it's altogether more ethereal. They had a sort of advanced naturalism even in the earliest days, hadn't they?"

"Yes, but this is very old, and as I say, by a much-travelled man, at least for those days. It reminds me of all those tiny, staring hands in the Wilton diptych, like so many doves on a blue sky; hands that couldn't possibly hold so much as a feather, but exquisite beyond belief. And look!—a treasure! I have the head of the Virgin intact."

He offered this sheet to Margaret, holding it out to her on his two hands. She lifted it carefully, and saw the radiant colours leap to life as she turned it to the window.

There was a quality in the very simplicity of it which was purely emotional. Nothing in the modern world had

that ravishing delightfulness for Margaret and Julian, perhaps because art had become too conscious of itself to remember its origin. But this, without any obvious beauty, seemed to embody the final expression of spiritual joy. It had the mannerisms of the early world, that face; it was no more naturalistic than the painter's hand, because it was above and beyond nature; a narrow oval, of the pathetic Flemish type, with long straight brows and short, wistful mouth; but possessing, apart from any quality of its features, a vivacity which fell nothing short of rapture.

"Do you like it?"

"Like it!" said Margaret. "I never saw anything so beautiful."

"I need only a few comparatively small pieces now; notably the picture, or the upper part of it, the little copy of this head. If you find me that in your travels, I shall be eternally grateful."

He wrapped the priceless fragment once again in its shroud, and laid it tenderly away in the chest.

"And what are you going to do with it if you do manage to complete it?" asked Julian.

"Have it set somewhere in New St. Julian's."

"But is there room for it?"

"There shall be," said Euan Pryce, smiling, "if I have to heave a brick through the memorial of the great Dr. Ferne." He picked up the bunch of keys again, and began passing the small ones through his fingers one by one. "This is the Hilmer Street gate. This is the key of the crypt, but I wouldn't use it if I were you. They over-worked the intramural burial idea—that's how the foundation was weakened—and the crypt is still a trifle too much like a Renaissance painting and a Hallow-e'en joke to suit all tastes, though a lot of the coffins were re-buried in the

new churchyard. And this—they let in a gate across the north transept; go through if you like, but don't run any risks. I think myself that it's quite safe, for moss and grass hold as fast as mortar; but I shouldn't like anyone else to take chances with it."

They thanked him and departed. Strangely, Margaret felt no nearer to Julian, though the face of the Virgin pearly white in its hood of green should have drawn their hearts together in the old way. As they walked down the slope of Queen Street and turned into Hilmer Street between the railings of the old churchyard and the sixteenth-century windows of a row of curio shops, he was talking animatedly about the panels of Adam of Eldun; his eyes alight with the old fever, and his voice rapid and eager; but she had a strange idea that he was not talking to her at all. The cold, smooth kiss of the glass lingered in her fingers; but she had connected it now, for no reason beyond a common preoccupation with spiritual things, with the unceasing couplet running in her brain:

*True pilgrimage of heaven, at last begin;
Great Heart of God, open and let me in.*

They came to the gate in the railings, a massive thing eight feet wide, which shrieked on a horrid note as Julian pushed it back; but the lock at least was well-kept, and yielded without a sound to the turn of the key. Within, the lush grass had been cut down to an uneven stubble, to make a path no more than a foot wide between the banks of coarse green laced with vetches and brambles, leading from the gateway where they stood to the north door.

They approached the nail-studded door through a

wilderness of over-ripe charlocks and milk-weed, which trailed here and there over the path, and crushed under their feet with a sickeningly moist sound. Much of the gold of trefoil and the rose of centaury which had made the scene so enchanting from Julian's window in Providence Cottage was already passing, strangled under the late summer fertility of weeds.

Julian fitted the key, and the door swung easily to his touch, all its great weight of timber and iron poised with such skill that a child could have opened it. The first glimpse they had of St. John's chapel showed it as surprisingly complete, not a hint of the desolation beyond troubling its calm; only when they had entered, and closed the door behind them, could they see the grey unnatural light falling vertically down through the shattered roof of the tower, and threading the carved oak rails before them. The sun had left its zenith more than an hour ago; and now the bars of gold which invaded the chapel through every rift of the walls beyond lay one above another like the rungs of a ladder, climbing up out of the dust and stone into the free air far above.

St. John's chapel lay in shadow, for the windows, foreign glass from Treves and the Netherlands, were set too high to do more than jewel islands high in the opposite wall with sapphire and emerald. The altar was on their left, naked without its hangings, the tarnished rood-screen and carved chancel-rails only accentuating its desolation. Julian stood in front of it and fixed his gaze upward to the right hand, and saw blue sky and half a broken window-frame where St. Catherine had been. The frames to east and west were gone completely, the jagged line of the wall being broken well below the place where they had been; but the standing frame of St. Luke was in the wall nearest himself, aloft out of his sight.

He looked round slowly, and felt for a moment that time had turned back, and set him beside his friend; as Patrick Mundy was indeed beside him, for his longing seemed suddenly to fill all the silent air with a frenzy of pain. Margaret, sitting on her heels to examine the carving of a choir-stall, hindered the perfect illusion Julian desired; not because he did not love her enough, but because he loved her far too much to be able to withdraw his mind utterly from her, and fix it, as he longed to fix it, upon Patrick Mundy. He turned away from her, and crossed to the rails which separated the chapel from the nave. The oak gate was open, but an iron gate had been placed across it on the outer side, and this was locked.

"Are you going through?" asked Margaret at his shoulder.

"Yes, but I shouldn't come if I were you."

Margaret smiled and followed him. They came into a waste of stone, green cairn and grey cairn heaped within the shell of the tower, and overgrown with bushes. On their left, the archway of the sanctuary stood complete, with a sharp diminuendo of wall running southward beyond for a few yards, to plunge into mounds of buried stone; on the right, the paving of the nave ran its full length, still level and smooth but for the grass which furred the joints of its stones, through a forest of little ash-saplings; before them, the husk of the tower ended in the three young trees; and behind, as they looked upward, they saw the frame of St. Luke standing like a crest above the roof of the north transept. Over all the burial mounds of Old St. Julian's, feathery nettles climbed wave on wave.

Julian walked forward into the light. Cobwebs and dust shook down upon him as he passed under the trees; but he emerged into quiet sunlight, with the churchyard

spread green before him, and on his left hand, across a wall and the darkness of trees, the diamonds of his own bedroom window already catching the sloping sun.

The hand of Patrick Mundy plucked at his sleeve, for Margaret was too near for speech; he turned to the right in obedience to the insistent urging, and plunged into the wilderness of graves.

"We shall have to go back through the chapel," said Margaret, from under the ash-trees, "to lock the doors again."

"Yes, I know. I shall be back in a moment. I just want to have a look at some of these old stones."

"Well, I'm not coming, Julian. There's no path, and my stockings are too good to be risked. I'll wait for you."

She found among the fragments of the wall, while he was gone, some older and quainter memorials than the one to which he was led among the yews; but none which could have interested Julian half so much. There was a wrought-iron rail, and within it a broad flat stone, raised no more than eight or nine inches from the ground. Bending over it, he could make out clearly the inscription upon it.

BENEATH THIS STONE LIES

the mortal part

of

DAMARIS BELGAINE

Died July 8th 1840,

aged 27yrs

Whose beauty and virtue
is in the Hand of God.

Also of
HENRY TRAFFORD BELGAINÉ
husband of the above.
Died January 17th 1883
aged 73yrs
After much loneliness
re-united.

Julian stood silent, filled with an inexplicable pity, not for Patrick now, but for Harry, and for all who might read that brief epitaph, and picture a devoted husband and a loving wife made of one ageless age again to love for ever. For even now he did not understand what the end of that marriage had been; but he was almost sure that Damaris had never for one moment been in love with Harry Belgaine.

"I am sorry," said Patrick Mundy in his ear, "about the poem. It was thoughtless. Forgive me."

"It doesn't matter," said Julian abstractedly. "She can hardly guess how it came there. Only, you understand, she must not be hurt. I'll risk everything else, but I can't risk Margaret."

"She need know nothing more. She shall not—not even where my body is, much less my soul. Though I remember," said the soft voice, "that she pitied me when she hardly knew my name."

"Hush!" said Julian, and laid his hand gently upon the poet's arm. "I must go back." For she was waiting, and already the seed of doubt was in her mind.

"First come with me. Only a moment more—there's something else I want you to see."

Margaret saw him emerge from the shelter of the yews, and make his way laboriously between crowded graves,

not back to where she waited, but towards the corner of the churchyard on her left, nearest to the garden wall of Providence Cottage. She saw that he walked as if with knowledge and a purpose, not casually, nor often glancing aside. The deadly curiosity of Psyche filled her heart. She went swiftly down into the long grass, and followed him.

He was standing over another grave, with a short, square stone of granite at its head; and for all the rustle of leaves and slur of grass round her ankles he did not hear her come. She stood at his elbow and looking down, read what he had read :

Here lies the body of

PATRICK MUNDY

SCHOLAR AND POET,

Died January 30th 1837

Aged 27yrs.

He was brought down in his youth
But he shall have youth without ending

Requiescat in pace.

XVII

PATRICK MUNDY IN FOLLY CRESCENT

FOLLY CRESCENT lay north of Eden Close, and perhaps half a mile away, and was reached by means of a series of furtive lanes like Red Harry Passage. The regular entrance was a broad road which swept inward from Greystone Street, off a bleak and grandiose George III square; but no one in Folly Crescent owned

carriages or horses now; no one kept up appearances, for no one had any considerable appearance to keep; and no one found the extra two hundred yards through the square worth walking, for the shopping centre had long shifted out of this once-fashionable backwater into the new streets farther from the river; so the denizens of the crescent went in and out after the manner of moles, by small dark tunnels in the walls.

The houses of the half-moon, three storeys high in peeling stucco, were flats now, each floor a home. Nothing remained of their former splendour, except the mounting-blocks at the edge of the wide pavement, and the dilapidated neo-classical plaster figures panelled on either side their doors; and even these latter were so chipped by inquisitive children and weathered by wind and rain that only here and there were the raffish satyr bodies and coquettish draperies at all recognisable. The chipped surfaces showed from afar as a pointless pattern of lighter grey, the places where the stucco had peeled away as blotches of dirty green moss; as if the whole crescent were infected with some diseased mildew. It was a melancholy place, the more so because it still showed signs of having been a pretentious place. An address in Folly Crescent had been a boast once; it was now merely somewhere to live, an inconvenient roof-tree which did at least keep out the rain and the wind.

The woman who lived in the ground-floor flat of No. 5 was inevitably washing her kitchen floor when Julian went in. She had spread her bucket, soap and brush generously over the tiled passage, though she would not for any consideration have washed an inch beyond the line of her own door. A perpetual war raged between the three tenants of No. 5 over those fifteen yards by one of red-quarried corridor. The second-floor tenant cleaned the

top flight of stairs, as was just, for they served only her convenience; the first-floor tenant fell into line by cleaning the first flight; but nothing would induce the woman on the ground-floor to assume responsibility for the passage. She argued that it was used equally by everyone in the house, and was no more her business than theirs; they, that she would only be taking her fair share of the work by undertaking to keep it clean. Consequently, it never was cleaned at all until Mrs. Philbin, whose forbearance towards grime was shortest, could stand the reproach of it no longer, and would sweep aggressively down from her eyrie on the second floor, with much ostentatious clattering of bucket and hiss of scrubbing-brush, to resurrect its shining redness. The woman on the ground floor was not disconcerted; she had been known to emerge from her kitchen in the middle of the performance, and step over Mrs. Philbin's outspread arm with lifted skirts and a disdainful sniff on her way to the street.

She leaned on her round red arms within her doorway as Julian came in, and looked up at him under the draggled locks of her greying hair, and said, but without attempting to remove it from his path: "Mind the bucket."

Julian stepped over it with an agility born of long practice in adapting himself to the circumstances of other people's lives, and said good morning to her pleasantly enough as he passed on towards the stairs. The woman sat back on her heels to stare after him for a moment, before she gathered bucket and brush inside and closed the door.

Julian was talking, apparently to himself, in the softest of undertones as he mounted the stairs.

"This is another old quarter," he said, "and fashionable once. I dare say you know it better than I do, for it must have been the centre of the town in your day. It's a bit

of a back-water now, but still respectable; that is, just so respectable that it looks indulgently on the weekly battles of the married couple on the ground floor—oh yes, that unpleasant person with the scrubbing-brush has a husband—but not so leniently on the midnight gallivantings of the unmarried girl on this floor. You see, I have all their life-histories from Mrs. Philbin. She's a good observer, but a little too arbitrary; I have to soften the outlines for myself."

He crossed the first-floor landing, and began to climb the second flight of stairs. There was a heart-shaped window, from which he glimpsed as he passed only a broad, gaunt courtyard, cumbered with a mouldy bundle of pea-sticks, several decrepit chicken-coops, and a rotten, paintless door unhinged from no doorway that he could see. Julian felt his friend's hand steal into the crook of his arm. The touch of was warm, now, and intimately known, and no shade of all its changes could lack response from him, or be without meaning.

"What's the matter?" he asked, in a half-tone more silent than a whisper.

"That's what I want to know." The hand quivered and relaxed. "You've shown me so much in this town that I never was wise enough or fine enough to see for myself. But I am sure you are bringing me here, to this old man's bedside, with some other purpose in view. Julian, I know you mean me well; but there must be something with which you haven't trusted me. Julian—who is he?"

"I don't know." Julian halted for a second, and seemed to be choosing his words with more than ordinary care. "Don't ask me anything yet. I've only suspicions to give you, and suppose they should be pure foolishness, after all? But I want you to tell me if anything—anything

in the old man or the room—means anything particular to you; and afterwards we'll see how much my theories are worth. And don't," said Julian, with a spurt of nerves, "don't begin to accuse me of not trusting you. I'm beset with people who think I don't trust them, just because I've nothing positive to give them in the way of confidences. What am I to tell you, when I don't know myself?"

He reached the head of the stairs, where the corridor sprang abruptly left and right to run through the entire breadth of old Robert Mullen's home. Mrs. Grace was just emerging from the door of her father's bedroom, hatless, with a light coat over her cretonne overall. She had her youngest child by the hand, a little girl of three, a charming incubus upon her already laden hands, since she was too young to be packed away to school, and too old to be left in safety in her cot for so much as a quarter of an hour. She was not yet of her brothers' colouring, though she had their blond and milky complexion; her head was a little sun of curls pale as primroses. She stood close in her mother's shadow, peering inquisitively at Julian with wide blue eyes; and he felt, as he had felt before, that Mrs. Grace was leading someone else's child. He waited with wrist tensed under the invisible fingers; but their touch remained hesitant and cool. There was nothing, then, in that dark head reared against the dun background of the wall, nothing in the broad brows, or the short, strong mouth, or the heavily-lidded eyes, to raise any ghosts for Patrick Mundy.

"Hullo, Mrs. Grace," said Julian, "how is he this morning?"

"Oh, a great deal better, Dr. Sears. His breathing's as easy again, and he'd like to sit up a bit, and read the paper, but I didn't like to let him until you'd seen him."

For the moment Julian had forgotten that Mrs. Grace had been free of the house in Eden Close for two full years. Her face, then, her voice, the trick of her walk and turn of her head, all were familiar to Patrick Mundy; yet at the sound of her voice now the poet's hand shuddered on his wrist, as if there was a remembered tone in it; no more than the tune of a song remembered from a dream, and yet significant to his suddenly quickened senses, at whose door it had knocked in vain for two years. He felt his own blood stir in hope. At least he was not yet proven wrong.

Mrs. Grace turned back into the room with them.

"Here's Dr. Sears, Father," she said from the doorway. "I've got to hurry off now; but if there's anything to fetch for you, I'll send Jo the minute he comes home from school at dinner-time. And if he doesn't go off with the Gallier boys again to-night I'll get him to come round and talk to you for a bit."

She gathered the little girl to her and departed, her steps passing light and steady down the stairs. Patrick withdrew his hand from Julian's arm, and looked round the room.

A large room it was, and high-ceilinged, with a long window which had once looked on spacious gardens. It looked now on a forest of chimneys, and a series of uniform concrete pits which were the backyards, gardens and playgrounds of the nearest row of new houses. Slate roof behind slate roof, the grey switchback undulated away into distance. From his pillows the old man could see only a frieze of chimney-pots and the colourless soar of the sky; but he lay watching this monotonous expanse patiently enough, for at least it contained pure light and clean air, two benefits which many people lacked.

"Well, how does it go to-day?" said Julian, with a smile.

"Mrs. Grace says you're better, and I must say you look it. How's the breathing? No pain now?"

It was his third visit; and though each day had found the old man stronger and easier, Julian did not anticipate many more months of life for the failing heart in that very tranquil body. Robert Mullen had been a big man in his day, but there was little of him now in the wide double bed. Pouches of skin left hanging where the fullness of healthy flesh had fallen away, spoiled what would have been a handsome face; but the eyes, under the wide brows familiar in his daughter, though in him grey now, and shaggy, were good, clear in their dark colour, and full of character. Julian did not know what manner of person her mother had been, but he was satisfied, so deeply did he feel that legacy of silent depth flowing through them both, that if there was indeed any key to the past in Dora Grace it must come from Robert Mullen.

"Oh, I'm a fine lot better, doctor," said the old man cheerfully, "I feel different again to-day. I was saying to Dora that I should like maybe to sit up for a bit, and have a read. It does me no harm; and it does get a bit dull down here looking at the chimneys."

"It will do you good to sit up, as a matter of fact," said Julian, reaching for the key of Mrs. Philbin's little medicine-chest. "But not until Mrs. Philbin's home, mind. I'll see that she gets home in good time. And only for an hour or so as yet. If you go ahead like this, we'll see about getting you to the window next week. There's not much to see, I admit, but there's a little more than just sky; and at least it will be some progress. I wish I could get you out into the fresh air while this lovely weather holds; but all those stairs—— Why do you live on the top floor, of all places?" It was a rhetorical question, and recognised as such. The old man smiled.

"Still, this is a better flat, and there's more light. I'm lucky to have such a good place."

"I wonder," mused Julian, groping inside the little white-wood chest for the digitaline granules, by means of which the tired old heart was induced to continue its function, "if we could beg, borrow or steal a bath-chair, and a couple of men capable of getting it up and down two flights of stairs? Euan Pryce might work it for us. If we could, you could be out in the park most of the day. Still, that's in the future." He found the box, and shook it; the resulting rattle was suspiciously thin, and on opening it he found only three granules left. The daily dose, which had begun six months ago at one, was now two; and when this spurt of summer was over it would probably have to be increased again. "You'll soon want some more of these," he said. "I'll send them to-night, by Jo."

"He's getting a fine big boy, is Jo," said Jo's grandfather, contentedly. "They're good children, all three of them, though I could wish one of them had been more like Dora. They all feature their dad." He sighed. "Ah, well, I suppose she's not done so bad, my Dora. But she's had to work hard. She never should have taken a labourer, with her gifts. She could play the piano and sing like a lark, Dr. Sears, and sew as fine as gossamer, and she was that pretty. You'll allow she's a handsome woman now."

"Yes," said Julian gently, "yes, a very handsome woman. She takes after your own side of the family, I should say, doesn't she? I can see a resemblance."

"Well, perhaps she does feature me a bit, but there never was much likeness in colour. Nobody on our side was black, as far back as I know. When I was young I was redder than Dora's boys, and so was my mother before me. But Dora has her eyes, I'm not saying she hasn't." Still mad-

denyingly outside the bounds of revelation, his interest flagged. He said: "There's a programme on at twelve I'd like to hear—a male voice choir from Cumberland. My wife's brother used to belong to it."

Julian lifted the wireless down from its table to a chair close beside the bed, where the old man could reach it easily.

"What programme is it on? North? I'll tune it in, and then you'll simply have to turn it on when the time comes. You can see the clock from there, can you?"

Above the chipped edge of the cabinet his eyes roved the room, and the ache of longing came into them. He did not know where Patrick was, and it irked him that all his passionate interest should be able to give him no inward sight of his friend even yet. Somewhere within those picture-crowded four walls the unseen hands quested and the unseen eyes searched, perhaps vainly. And even if he was right, and the blood of Damaris ran thinly in the old man's chilling heart, and vividly in Dora Grace's veins, how were they benefited? Julian knew only that he must have knowledge, that as yet he was buidling a house without bricks.

The room, now that he stood back and looked at it as a whole, bristled with detail; photographs, most of them old and faded, in stand-up frames of gilt and worn plush; a proud collection of cheap crest china from various holiday resorts; three impossible dogs in brown and white pottery, remotely resembling Clumber spaniels; two small artificial trees in wooden pots, bearing apples brighter than the Hesperides; a set of pale-blue glass vases; two plaster figures of a Dutch boy and girl, and a host of other bric-à-brac. The outline of a big room was lost in this orgy of decoration; for the flat had to contain, in two bedrooms, a living-room, a kitchen, a bathroom, and

a quondam powder-closet, now a linen-cupboard, the accumulation of a whole household, and a household with an affectionate feeling for the ornate. Perhaps, after all, to look for one thread of relevant fact in that museum was attempting the impossible.

Julian settled the taut wires carefully over the edge of the table, and turned back to re-lock the medicine-chest.

"I'll come in and see you again on Saturday," he said. "In the meantime, you can sit up for an hour or so each day; unless, of course, you find yourself getting tired again. Don't overwork yourself yet; you've got a long way to go."

As he turned from the bed he felt Patrick's hand upon his arm, touching and clenching instantly, with an excitement which flowed into Julian's blood like fire. He yielded to the guidance it gave, and was drawn towards the door, to a small table studded with upright photographs. He did not know to what his attention was being drawn, but he halted there casually on his way out; and in the shelter of his body one of the jumble of pictures was plucked from its place and put into his hand.

An old, old photograph, no bigger than a visiting-card, was stuck at a lopsided angle behind the glass of a worn red plush postcard frame. It was faded to a deep amber, and blotched here and there with a brownish-pink from its aged and inexpert processing; but the face was still clear enough to be notable in the challenge of its gaze and the boldness of its poise. It was not the face of Damaris, nor a face of her time; a later and less lovely fashion had looped the voluminous hair in rolled curls over either ear, spanned the throat with a band of velvet, and pinned a huge brooch upon the bosom; but the same grandeur of brow and eye saluted him in this broader, more passionate and audacious countenance. She was

young, but not in her first youth; and only the extraordinary vigour of her person kept her alive at all in this ghost of a portrait.

He felt the old man's eyes upon him and said calmly, turning to face the bed: "Is this one of your household goddesses? She must have been very striking in the flesh."

"That's my mother," said Robert Mullen with pride. "She was going on for forty when it was took, too."

"Yes. Yes, I recognise the eyes again. They seem to be a family legacy." He set down the faded photograph steadily in its place, and followed the impatient hand from the room. "Good-bye, Mr. Mullen," he said, and closed the door behind him; and the hand settled upon his shoulder like a lighting bird.

"Well?" asked Julian in a low voice, as they went down the stairs.

"You still don't know, then, who she is?"

"I know nothing about her, except that she has the eyes and brows of Damaris."

"And the face of Harry," said Patrick Mundy. "It is a picture of his daughter and hers—Henriette Belgaine."

XVIII

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

ON Sunday morning Julian and Margaret made their Communion, together and apart; she in the little church at Brockle Hill, he at New St. Julian's.

In the same hour they made, as had often happened before, the prayers which were deepest in their hearts. Often these prayers had leaped together in their timeless,

spaceless world like the joining of two hands in marriage, so unanimous had they been in desire, so united in love. But now they rose separate and parallel, never to meet in any earth or any heaven.

"Beloved God," prayed Margaret, as the chalice left her lips, and her fingers threaded again on the burnished rail, "take away the shadow from between us. I love him as I love no one else on earth. I can't bear to lose him. I can't bear to be with him and yet alone, as I am now. Take away the shadow of the dead man from over him, and the shadow of banishment from me. Or if he has a wider destiny than I can share, at least let me understand what enemy has defeated me. But whatever happens to me, let him be happy——"

"O God of immeasurable mercies," prayed Julian, as the brown hands of Euan Pryce bearing the silver plate passed silently from before his eyes, "deliver my friend. If my death could end his bondage, I would pay it. If there is any power in me, teach me how to raise him into heaven. Only, O Jesu most holy, let the deliverance be now, while I am with him, before I die, and he is left alone again. Now, in this most sacred moment, set him free for ever. No matter what happens to me, let him reach the city of his desire at last——"

XIX

"ONLY GOD HIMSELF IS MORE MY CREDITOR"

EARLY on Monday morning, just as Julian came running down the stairs already ten minutes late for breakfast, the telephone rang.

"Hullo! Julian Sears here—— Dr. Sears. What is it?"

"Hullo, Julian," said Margaret. "Am I inopportune? You sound in a terrible hurry. Shall I get off the line, and ring you this afternoon?"

"No, please don't. I'm so sorry! I am late, but it's my own fault; I overslept."

"Another late night?" asked Margaret, forgetting her immemorial resolve not to fuss over him.

"Oh, no, I had a most restful evening, and no one knocked me up. I went to bed early, too." He thought of the night and smiled. It was true that he had gone early to his bedroom; but for how many hours he had sat there in his dressing-gown, with Thomas à Kempis turned down on his knee, and Patrick Mundy's ringing voice in his ears, even he did not know.

"Julian, are you going to be very busy to-night? Mrs. Cator has given me two tickets for the Philharmonic concert at the Guild Hall. Can you come?"

"Why, of course, I'd love to. I hear they've captured a real, live Italian tenor. I should have suggested going, but I was afraid you would be tied by the heels."

"So I should have been, but her sister is paying a flying visit to-night—the one from Durham, Mrs. Purdie—on her way down to London; and they'll both have so much to say that they'll have no time to worry me. So she bought me the tickets last night, and gave me her blessing. Where shall we meet?"

"Can't you come here first?"

"I'm afraid not. My train gets in at eight-fifteen, and the concert begins at half-past, so we'll only just have time to get there. I'd say meet the train, but it's such a busy one, being the only fast in the evening. We might miss each other."

"By the fountain in East Square—the side where the Triton with the broken horn sits."

"Scrupulous child! Is the fountain so very big? You'll be punctual, won't you, Julian?"

"I'll be beforehand," said Julian. "At eight-fifteen I shall be waiting."

"Good-bye, then, until we meet there."

"Good-bye, Margaret."

"Good-bye" had always a final and irrevocable sound about it. He wondered why they used it so lightly, even for a parting of a few hours.

It was not in Julian's mind that Patrick Mundy should ever leave him now; but in the early evening, when he had returned from surgery, and Mrs. Philbin had long since departed, and they had the first cool and quiet to themselves in the hall, Patrick said:

"I am not coming with you to-night."

"Why not?" asked Julian, raising his head in surprise. "She will not know you are there."

"We have said things like that before, and she has known; not, perhaps, that I was at her shoulder, but that you had something else—some shadow—in your mind. No, this is her night, not mine. There must be no shadow in your mind—nothing but Margaret. I shall not come."

"Very well. But I'm going first to Folly Crescent, to take the old man my cast-off speaker, and get some more information out of him if I can. You'll come so far with me, at any rate?"

"What do you hope to gain from him?" cried the poet, in a burst of despairing impatience. "Damaris died when Henriette was born. Neither she nor her son knows anything of my love. How could they? And if they knew her life from end to end, how could that help me, when she is dead and gone, and I am here in prison?"

A keener sense of feeling than he had ever possessed for any other companion, had partly supplied the lack of sight

in Julian's relations with his friend. He could cross a room without hesitation now, and lay his hand upon the invisible arm as surely as he could meet and kiss Margaret.

"I know it seems a forlorn hope. But I feel, what you do not, a dreadful sort of hunger for knowledge of Damaris. Every crumb of insight into her heart is another step on the road; for until I know what she was, I can't know what has become of her."

"I tell you she was only a body," said the poet, "and by now her body is clay."

"I don't believe that. I thought you knew. I don't believe she could just die, and leave nothing behind. No one since the beginning of the world could do that. We won't talk about it now. Are you coming to Folly Crescent?"

"No," said Patrick Mundy, slowly and softly. "Go on with your quest for Damaris. Don't trouble about me. I am going on a pilgrimage."

He was gone from Providence Cottage before Julian let himself out by the front door and locked it behind him. He knew it by the emptiness, and by the silence, which fell like a cold foreboding of night over the golden air of sunset. There was no hand on his shoulder as he crossed Eden Close, and stranger yet, no sense of that near presence behind the hand, no flood of changing emotions, unrestrained and untrammelled by flesh, coursing into his own mind from the stormy mind whose priest and anchorage he was. The removal of this weight from his soul flung him into a sort of feverish vertigo. Walking with downcast eyes between the leaning walls of black, and brown, and yellowish-white, in a canal of dark-blue gloom, with the pure sky above him a winding ribbon of saffron frayed with gables, he thought of Margaret with intense longing; for she was rest to him, from friend and enemy,

from all sins of omission and commission, from success and failure, from the necessity of action and the urgency of thought. Then he remembered that through no fault of his or her own, Margaret had no longer any rest to offer him.

He let himself into No. 5, Folly Crescent, just as the clock of St. Andrew's chimed a quarter to eight, and climbed the three flights of stairs, to find Mrs. Philbin ironing in the minute kitchen, and old Robert Mullen sitting up in his bed, reading a newspaper. It was an uncomfortable process to watch, for his eyes were so bad that he had to hold the paper only a few inches from his face; but at least he was improved in every other way, his breathing easy and almost soundless, his face no longer so colourless.

"I'm right glad you turned up, doctor," he said, folding the paper away from him as Julian entered the room. "The battery's given out, and Louie's so busy I don't want to trouble her, and I can't reach to do it myself. The other one's there on the table, if you don't mind me asking you to put it in for me. Dora's Jim fetched it up from the shop this morning, but this was still going then."

Julian set down his speaker in the first clear space which offered among the forest of adornment, and threw down his gloves beside it. "There, that's the speaker I was telling you about. I haven't time to put it in now, but I'll do it on Wednesday morning, and I think you'll find it will improve your reception about a hundred per cent. The one you have in is years out of date. They're all moving-coil now." He turned the set round, and disconnected the used accumulator. It rested in a niche, upon two raised slips of wood obviously put in long after the set was made, and by an amateur hand. "Have you a pen-knife? Or a paper-knife will do."

The window was open, and the breeze carried in to them clearly the chiming of bells from the Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart, an eerie fall in a minor key. The sky flowed away from the panes like a lake of fluid gold, and roof upon roof the city sped golden under it. Julian, scraping away at terminals, said:

"It's almost worth while living on the top floor on a night like this."

"Yes, it's a good place," said the old man, following his glance with his deep and dark eyes under their shaggy grey brows. "Yes," he sighed, in a deep and sweet content, "a good place. I'm a lucky chap to be still paying my own way in my own home, and me seventy-three next week. Dora wanted me to go to her, you know, after I was hurt at the pit. But I said no, she'd got her own family to look after, and I should only be a drag on her. I had my bit of compensation, you see, and I'd been a saving man; so I came here, and Louie's husband died about then, and she came to keep the house. Right glad to have a home and a bit of company, she was, so it turned out all right for both of us. I'm not saying but my bit of money's dwindled, like, but it'll tide my life out in comfort."

"Is yours a long-lived family?" asked Julian, closing the pen-knife with a snap.

"Not what I'd call long-lived, no. My father nor my mother never saw seventy. He was only turned fifty-three when he went, and she lived only five years after him. Wonderful fond of him she was, though he'd nothing, and she was as different as gold from glass. I never saw any of her people, and she never told me anything about them, but I knew they were different stock from our folks. She had such a grand, proud way with her, whatever she did——"

"You're more hers than his, I think," said Julian, pushing the new accumulator into its niche. It was smaller than the other, and rested on only one of the slips of wood tackled in to raise it from the base, so that it hung drunkenly on one side. "And so is Dora. This battery won't stand straight. What can I use to block it?"

"Oh, of course, I forgot that," said the old man, and leaned on one elbow to point to the other side of the table. "You see that pile of old exercise books—we always wedge it with one of them. Just push it in the side; it'll hold it up."

Julian picked up the nearest, an old-fashioned book with a mottled brown cover in stiff boards, half the once-glossy surface paper peeled away from it, and the leather corners frayed like mouldy lace.

"Hullo, these are pretty antique, aren't they?" He turned over the others, opened one or two, and found well-kept accounts in a round hand faded muddy brown by time, and notes of debts still outstanding, and columns of scores, at some curious card-game. "What a record of the financial side of a life! Don't you find these too interesting to be used as stop-gaps?"

"Ah, well, I've lived all my life with them. Father's father's, most of them are, and one or two mother gave me to draw in when I was a little lad. Kept a saddler's shop, father's father did, but his dad was a collier before him, and his son went back to the pits again. They can't keep away for long. And that one you've got hold of is a diary my mother's mother kept. I used to read it to find out about her, but it doesn't tell much. Not even her name."

Julian, who had thrust the mottled book half into the cabinet, drew it out again with a gesture as passionate

as if he had been plucking the Golden Fleece from its shrine.

"Whose diary did you say it was?"

"My mother's mother's. There must be another book before it, because this one starts in the middle, like, and even this one isn't filled. She got tired of writing it, I suppose, like everybody does. Or else she got so much to do she had no time to write about it."

Julian sat staring at the book, and it was shaking in his hands. If he had asked for a miracle, he had been offered a miracle; and for a moment he dared not believe that the prodigy was more than a dream. It seemed to him incredible that anything of the dark-eyed woman could by any alchemy have been kept prisoner for a hundred years in this dingy cover. It smelled musty, for the leather had several times been in damp corners. It smelled dead; that was the word it roused in his mind. It was a coffin. If the body of Damaris Ferne lay in rotting rosewood under the tombstone at Old St. Julian's, with Harry's name written over it, yet the soul of her lay here in this mildewed leather, with folded hands and closed eyes; and under whose name was this Damaris buried?

He opened the diary. There was no heading of any kind; but the brown ink, here and there almost golden, burst immediately into a lyric prose which made the round, childish hand in which it was written look like a copyist's unenthusiastic effort.

"asked if I wrote always my most intimate thoughts, and when I replied no, I do not, wondered why I kept diaries at all. I said that it was not to reveal my deepest feelings, but to remind me that I do feel. And when he did not at all understand, I was glad; for though

I had not said more than I meant, I had said more than I meant him to know. All the happiness I have had in my life I have had from Harry. Only God Himself is more my creditor."

Julian closed the book in great excitement. If she had conspired with destiny to prove her perfect humanity in one paragraph of her childish hand, she could not have done it more surely. He had her clear now. Patrick had given her a body as rare as a dream; and she herself had crowned it with a soul like a steady flame. Julian's mind tasted her perfectness.

"May I take this home and read it?" he asked, in a voice which trembled. "I promise to bring it back safely."

"Take it and welcome," said the old man, rustling his newspaper. "Keep it if it's any good to you. I've read it time and again. I've lots of books you might like to see. Bless you, they're no good to me now, I've hardly any eyes to see 'em with. Give me the wireless, every time."

Julian pushed one of the saddler's account books into the hollow beside the accumulator, and took his leave with the precious diary under his arm. It seemed to him very light to contain, as it must contain, the destinies of two souls. He hurried back to Eden Close with the evening cool and blue in his face, and reached the door as New St. Julian's chimed a quarter after eight. The sunset was gone; but limpid and dim with the last reflection of the afterglow, the lettering of the porch leaned out to him.

"Peace be within thy walls—and plenteousness within thy palaces."

He pushed open the door and ran into the hall, where dusk and silence filled every corner and cranny as if with a palpable mist.

"Patrick, Patrick, are you here? Patrick—where are you?"

The silence fell back softly over his triumphant shout; and yet he felt clearly what had been missing on his departure, the presence of his friend. The uncomforted soul had come back into the house; he knew it.

"Patrick, are you in the house? Patrick——"

He dashed up the stairs, past the landing where the two phantasms of Margaret and Damaris stood for ever hand in hand, past the diamond-gleaming window, and into his own bedroom, panting and laughing and flourishing the charm.

"Patrick, where are you? I've found her!"

"Why, Julian!" cried Patrick Mundy, from within; and the chair by the writing-desk which had belonged to Damaris rocked wildly, as if he had started up from it at the sound.

"Patrick, do you hear, I've found her—I——"

He stopped, the words snapping on his lips, and stood there in the doorway with staring eyes and outspread hands, the book held out with the impetus of his entry, his chest still heaving from the impetuous speed at which he had taken the stairs—suddenly still with an intense stillness, as if the lightest movement might break a trance in which he longed to remain.

"Don't move!" he whispered urgently. "Don't move—I can see you."

XX

AN EXILE FROM THE CITY

THE revelation had come in an instant, between one step and the next; not with any contact of suddenness upon his eyes, for he saw it for a full second before he realised that he was seeing it. The clear outlines seemed to spring into sight as he reached a certain position within the threshold of the room; as if the light which fell sheer through that illusory body when viewed direct, at an oblique angle could bring the past into focus, could glance from opaque surfaces where none were, and build imagined flesh upon imagined bone to a vivid and poignant phantasm of reality. So soft a light it was now, and so blue; too tender to pierce, and yet too limpid to hide, the face on which it fell.

Patrick Mundy stood between the writing-desk and the chair, with a hand upon each. He was taller than Julian by several inches, and straight as a poplar-tree, but spare; too frail for the beauty his energy demanded, too alert with the passion for movement to seem at ease in stillness. His shoulders were slender and square within the elegantly-cut black coat. But there was so much of circumstance about him, so many details to paint into the picture, that Julian never was fully conscious of the half. He was staring, not at a period portrait, but at his friend whom he knew as perhaps Jonathan never knew David, and for whose sorrows his mind was tormented night and day. He saw the hand advanced upon the back of the chair, lean, elegant, irresolute, the same hand which rested so constantly upon his shoulder while they were together; but the slit cuff, the line of gold buttons lying flat along the narrow wrist, the shower of white ruffles dazzling

between black of sleeve and ivory of skin, the plain golden ring, and the broad cornelian intaglio above it—these he did not see.

But between clustering brown hair and crisp stock, the face held him. An introspective face, as he had pictured it, but emotional rather than intellectual, though the brow was broad and full. The eyes were set so deep under straight brows that the shape of them was one great shadow severing his face, as if he wore a mask of black gauze; yet dark as they were, and hemmed by darkness, their colour was startlingly positive, the intense blue which is almost black. Nothing of him had more than a pathetic half-beauty; but those eyes at least had none of the fastidious indecision of the rest of the face. They made no appeal. Their tragedy was not shared. They looked at him with a soft and penetrating remoteness. They might have been a prophet's eyes, or a patriot's, but for the too tender mouth which smiled with them. Too long for weakness was this mouth, and too short for strength, as sensitive as a woman's, with corners drawn inward to triangular shadows. Under it his chin was spare and firm, marked with a vertical cleft like a little dark imperial.

"Well?" he said, and his smile deepened; but he did not move.

Julian advanced a step stealthily, afraid of throwing the illusion out of focus again. He said in a hushed voice:

"Why, you're younger than I am!" Until then he had not realised it.

"And much older. I'm still young, then; that doesn't change. What am I wearing?"

"A black coat, cut high in the collar—a flowered waistcoat, with a seal on a ribbon in the lower buttonhole—a full white stock—dull fawn trousers buckled under your

shoes—black shoes. Two rings on your hand, the two you once described to me; a woman's ring and a seal. Don't you really know?"

The brown head shook slowly.

"Do not think I shall always appear like this to you. Some day you may see me in other clothes, perhaps in the riding clothes I wore that day, with her scarf around my head—some day, perhaps, dead in my coffin. I shall not know. This room saw me in my black coat—this coat," he said, and looked down with a bitter smile at the sleeve he could not see. "It was a day when she was not well. She had a headache, and they let me sit here and read to her because she would not rest. I see her head upon the pillows now, her black hair loose and uncurled, her face pale—I suppose, like me, this room has never forgotten."

He turned his head away. Julian advanced another step, but the mirage did not dissolve. He came close, and touched the nearer hand, and finding it still and firm, closed his own upon it.

"Don't be afraid," said Patrick Mundy, "I shall not vanish. If we have come so near, I think you will see me often, whenever the air is still, and the hour silent, and the light gentle. It is because I have a kindness for you—and you, perhaps——"

"It is because I love you as a brother," said Julian. "Better than a brother, perhaps, for I never had one by whom to measure you."

"Nor I. But I think he would have paled in the discovery of you." He turned suddenly, and Julian saw his face near and clearly, in spite of its youth unimaginably sad. "What shall I do if I outlive you? There will be no second miracle for me. You see, I admit my selfishness. If I were truly your brother, and lost you, I could follow

you into the other world—or if Harry was right, I could at least cease to care. But I—I have not even the poor satisfaction of being able to kill myself.”

“Hush, don’t speak of such things. You will be free long before I die, please God.”

“You’ve told me so. But although the present is in your gift, you can’t change the future, Julian. Don’t offer me empty comfort.”

“It isn’t empty; it’s the truth. We have made progress. I don’t pretend that we shall break our way through the coil, but in the end we shall be free of it just as surely. Look, this is another step on the way.”

He held out eagerly the diary of Damaris Belgaine.

“What is it?” asked Patrick doubtfully, advancing his hand, but not touching the mottled covers.

“It is her diary. Yes, by the very hand of Damaris. I found it in the old man’s room. It’s the proof that she had soul enough to believe in and love God. It’s proof positive that she’s safe in heaven. Come and read it with me.”

He picked up his reading-lamp from the bed-table and carried it to the desk. As he set it down it jarred upon something which lay there; and switching on the light, he found a half-disc of glass, jagged-edged, and fitted together like a jig-saw puzzle of four or five pieces. Its diameter was perhaps ten inches, and he could trace here and there through dust and mould thin threads of metal.

He turned in perplexity to look at Patrick. The extreme humanity of him was gone, and he moved now like a wraith indeed, light and substance gleaming through him; but his face, which was above the radius of the lamp, remained vividly clear. He was smiling, though his smile had a wistful quality still.

“Yes, we have both been looking for hidden treasure,

it seems. You for the soul of Damaris; and I for the *tondo* of St. Luke." He extended his hand into the light, where it moved like a cloud of vapour, tracing the oval of the Virgin's face, the fall of the hood round it, and the drooping lines of her meek shoulders. Only the faintest gradations of grey marked green from blue, and blue from flesh. "You'll see little of it now, but the outline is there. Do you follow it?"

"Oh yes, I recognise the shape of the head. So this was your pilgrimage—the *tondo* of St. Luke! Where did you find it?"

"In the crypt, among the coffins. One corner has fallen in under the edge of the tower, and there is a heap of rubbish and soil under it. One of these fragments I found a week ago, by the edge of the hole above; and to-night I have resurrected these others from their grave. You see, the dead do rise. Take them to your friend, but don't tell him that I found them."

Julian gathered the dirty slips of glass in his hands. The lamp was not strong enough to show much of their colour through the coating of grime, but even so the face was like an oval pearl.

"Do you see what this means?" he asked excitedly. "You've given Adam's St. Luke back to the world. Euan Pryce will never be able to thank you enough." He laid the fragments together carefully in a handkerchief and shut them into the drawer of the desk. "I'll take them to him to-morrow. But now come and read my hidden treasure."

"I am afraid," owned the poet in a trembling voice. "If you should be wrong——"

"I am not wrong. The first paragraph proves what I say. Come and read for yourself."

He spread the book open in the pool of light, and draw-

ing a second chair forward, squared his elbows along the edge of the desk with a sigh of excitement and triumph. Patrick sat down beside him, his arms and hands grown misty in the light; and they began to read together.

XXI

THE JOURNAL OF DAMARIS BELGAINÉ

.
asked if I wrote always my most intimate thoughts, and when I replied no, I do not, wondered why I kept diaries at all. I said that it was not to reveal my deepest feelings, but to remind me that I do feel. And when he did not at all understand, I was glad; for though I had not said more than I meant, I had said more than I meant him to know. All the happiness I have had in my life I have had from Harry. Only God Himself is more my creditor.

August 10.

There has been great bustle over sending out of cards for the wedding, and ordering of things for me, but I would rather have had all quiet, I do not want to be a show, nor does Harry I am sure, but he will quarrel with nothing, he is glad to have everyone happy, and I am glad to have him happy. We have not been able to ride together several days for this terrible business, and to-day when he came they would not let me go down and talk to him, but he could only kiss his hand to me from the foot of the stairs, and then he was sent into the study to dispute with my father, and for all I know they are disputing still. I have not been down. I am very tired, and I like the evening here, the sun is full in my window. I suppose it will be still the same when I am dead. It is

very quiet. I wish everyone in the world could hear this quietness.

They have been fitting my dress, which is white Indian muslin, though I am sure Mama would prefer satin if we could afford it. I am so glad we cannot, I shall be garish enough, and it matters so little. There was nothing to-day but dressmakers stifling me in Indian muslin. It is not time for the hairdressers yet, but their turn will come. She has never cared how I looked before. But I do believe she is the better for having this excitement, and since she will not let me do anything better for her, and since with the best will in the world I can do so little, it is not much to submit to being made fine for her pleasure. *

We are coming to live here. It is her wish, and I cannot refuse her, though I hate the idea, and so does Harry, and he would have rescued me by force if I would have consented to be rescued. I love and hate this house, and both in far too fierce a measure to wish to spend my life in it. But she is so ill, and in such pain, that if she believes she has any joy of me she shall have it all her days, though she never has shown any kindness to me, or admitted that she had any of mine. For himself Harry does not care where we go, but he has been very indignant for me, and would have carried me off if I had not restrained him. So very grudgingly he has fallen in with the plan, and intends to sell his house, which should fetch him a good price, and keep on only the kennels and stables.

I ought to go down before he leaves. The sun is gone now; it is getting late, the room is full of red from the sky. If only I could write down, for someone a thousand years away from me, what I am really thinking now. It would be so cold and comfortable at a distance like that, but I am much too bothered to be able to write to my

shadow; if I have a shadow it must be like myself, all tangled in corsage ribbons and stay-laces and Indian muslin.

This is a very bad exposition, I have repeated myself at least three times, and they have all tried so hard to teach me to write properly.

We have sent an invitation to Patrick, but I do not suppose he will come, I dare say he has forgotten us by now.

August 16.

The bishop cannot come to marry us, we are both glad, because we think him in confidence a shocking old hypocrite, but I need not say for different reasons. Harry thinks all Christians are shocking hypocrites except me, and I am terribly misled. As for me, I cannot face God in my marriage if he reads the words, he has a beautiful voice, but he does not mean any of the saintly things it says, or he would look better after his own poor, and less after a certain lady. I would not say it even to Harry, and it is not gossip, I had it from no one, I have eyes of my own.

My dress is ready. They tell me I am to carry a prayer-book, as more befitting my father's daughter than flowers. My mother laughed when he said this. She is not so well, I suppose it is reaction, but the excitement still keeps her upon her feet. I asked her about our Manchu ancestress this morning, which she would never tell me before. She was not communicative, but she did admit it was true. It seems the lady never came to England, indeed she did not live very long after the marriage, she was poisoned soon after the child was born, and her husband escaped home with the poor little baby. He was a Normanton in the China trade. Mama does not know the woman's

name, for her family are as reticent about it as she has been, and it is over two hundred years ago. They think it very disgraceful. I think it just very tragic.

August 21.

To-morrow is my wedding-day, and this is the last night I shall ever be the person I am now. What can it matter if just this one night in my life I write what I told Harry I do not write, the deepest feelings of my heart. No one will ever read them, and I am sick and tired of shutting them in. It is the truth that——

(Here the page ended, and they saw that the leaf following had been cut out of the book, only a narrow frill remaining where it had been. Though the paper was limp, it was still good, and the fellow leaf had not, even in a hundred years, torn from its anchorage. The narrative resumed in what was evidently another day.)

——and we are here in Wales, at a funny little house called Tan-y-coed, which Lisbet tells me means “under the trees”, though there are not many trees, only a few pines and larches, which are rare round here, but then we are nesting half-way up the mountain. I expect this was all one great forest centuries ago, they say there were bands of robbers here as recently as a hundred years ago, and one of the rebel chiefs held out here against Edward the First for five years. In the morning when I wake up the sun is just over the peaks a long way off, and all the sky is rosy red, and all the valley is blue, and it is like being in Switzerland, or I think it must be, for I have never been there, indeed I have never been anywhere. There used to be slate quarries a mile away, but they worked out, and now they are grown over with lichens

and ferns, and all the little buildings have fallen down. You find bricks and planks grown quite fast into the grass. It is very lonely, but we do not mind. Lisbet comes up from the village to cook and clean for us, and though she is only fifteen, she makes a better housewife than I do. The Welsh people are very peculiar, they will not talk to me, they look at me as if I were a witch; but Harry says they treat all strangers like that, and as there are only two or three in the whole village who speak English, I should have to take Lisbet about with me if I wanted to make friends. Still I do not think they need be suspicious of me, they cannot possibly think me a very terrible person.

I suppose the wedding was a success, it passed off quite smoothly at least, no one dropped anything, or tripped over the chancel steps, and the weather was quite dazzling. Then afterwards there was a great deal of rushing about and fussing, and I was glad when we got away, and there was no one but Harry and me in the coach rocking away towards the borders here. Harry is proud of discovering this place, and so he should be, for I am not tired here, and we are going to stay here for a month. We dress just as we choose, and lie about in the sun, and instead of being elegantly pale we are brown like Indians, and indeed, Harry is the dearest companion in the world, I must not ever disappoint him, ever by a word or a look. But oh, to think of going back to prison after this state of freedom. I do not curl my hair, but roll it up on my neck as I used to do, and indeed sometimes I wear it on my shoulders like a little girl; and we ride, and walk, and fish to our hearts' content, and picnic every day, for it is wonderfully fine. Why has no one else ever realised that I wanted to do these things?

I was right about Patrick. He sent us a gift, and a letter

in the familiar style of the youth who taught me to like Donne and Herbert, but could not teach me to write a balanced sentence or punctuate a paragraph; but he did not come.

August 30.

There were two swans on the river in the valley, and now, it is horrible, someone has killed one of them with a stick, the poor body is lying in the mud, it is not beautiful nor graceful any more. Why should people kill things? It was so lovely, and now the whole place is spoiled. It is as if I had died, this is a different world. You see, I cannot go on being a little girl or a wild Indian, I must go back to prison. I thought I had escaped, but there is no escape, the world is all one, a dark place full of the abomination of cruelty. There is not a fairy-story in the world but has an ogre or a monster in it, and these are the reality, these, not the good fairies, nor the beautiful princesses, nor the knights in armour, but the trolls and the warlocks with hearts of stone. I know now, and I do not claim it as a virtue, for I would kill it if I could, that I shall never be happy while there is a single tear left to shed in the earth. If only we could somehow kill our hearts without ending our lives.

After supper last night we went down to the river with handfuls of bread, and the moon was up over the water, and the trees were like thin black ghosts, and not a sound among them; and then we saw the dead swan. The poor mate was out on the water alone, quite still, we could not do anything for her, nothing in the world, we were not gods to make him alive again, and there was no other gift. We threw bread, she would not move, it was like throwing flowers on a coffin. My father would call me morbid, but I do not care, it is more tragic to me than if

my own love was dead at my feet, for she, poor thing, she cannot reason about it, and does not even understand what death is, leave alone resurrection. But I know, and as God sees me I think it very little matter what becomes of me here, except that I cannot bear Harry should be hurt.

I threw all the bread on the water and we went away, we went and sat in the bracken in the woods. Harry was very silent, but when he saw how sad I was he laughed, and said mockingly, Never mind, they will be together again in heaven. I said, Yes, but she does not know, and then he did not laugh any more, but suddenly kissed and clung to me, and said, Oh, my darling, my darling, do not ever die and leave me, and flinging himself down in my lap began to weep.

I wish I could make him see what I see, but I cannot. We must wait for a miracle.

September 3.

Harry said the lonely swan would fly away, but she has not, she swims here and there round the island in the river, and is sometimes quite still for hours at a time, and will not notice me when I take dainties to try and coax her near to me. I shall not go there, it only makes me sad.

We rode ten miles out to a cave in the mountains, where an outlaw chief used to live, and as it rained for the first time since we arrived at Tan-y-coed we had to wait in the cave for three hours or more, it was very big, and had a terrifying echo like thunder, you could get quite a little army into it, horses and all, and it was very warm and dry. Now I am tired, but we are safe home, and it has stopped raining; if I look from the window I see the world all green and drowned, I feel like Noah's

wife. We have no books here, except my Bible, so we talk, and Harry is a much better talker when my father is not here. I suppose their argument will go on for ever without end when they are living under the same roof.

Harry has looked over my shoulder, he says I will not let it, if it distresses you. It does distress me, but I have covered this line with my hand, so he cannot see it.

September 10.

My poor swan is dead, we found her this morning in the rushes dead of a broken heart. Harry looked at her, and I saw he was in some bitterness again, and he said, She was right, it was the only thing left for her, she was brave and wise. It was like a lament. I know that he knows what I would answer, so I have said nothing more to him, though I pity and pray for him with all my heart. It is terrifying to see that shadow come into his bright face, and to remember with a start that every moment of his life, while he laughs and rides and plays like a merry boy, the shadow of death hangs over him, or my death or his own, either one an end of our being together, of the movement and the mirth and the light. I do not pretend to understand how he can believe that, but I know he does believe it; and is it any wonder if I feel that the whole of my own life will be well spent if I can change his heart on this matter? Indeed, that is the only purpose I see now for having come into this world at all. And yet how he would laugh at me, if he read this, for trying to save his soul. I am sure he could call it that—saving his dear soul which is so much kinder and more generous than mine, and so much nearer to heaven, if he did but know it.

We have neither of us any heart to ride or walk to-day. We are sitting on a felled tree above the quarry. I can

hear Lisbet singing as she goes home down the valley path, though she must be over a quarter of a mile away, but I think we two are nearer to weeping than singing.

September 17.

We have had letters from home, they are well, and looking for us back, and I suppose in a week more we shall be home in Providence. It is a little like going back into purgatory. Harry knows what I feel, and is as concerned that I should believe in present happiness, as I am that he shall believe in future happiness. He says that he will change my life in Providence, that it will be a new life now I have him with me, that I shall find I am not now living in the shadow of a petrified dogmatist and a hopelessly selfish invalid. I tried to stop him from calling them such things, but he will not be hushed, but I know that he does not mean the half of it, he is only angry for me, because I have not, if you please, been understood or appreciated. God forbid that I should hold it against fate that the whole scheme of the world has not been expressly arranged for my convenience. I did ask him what was selfish in my mother's superhuman courage in pain, and he replied Courage is often the most selfish of qualities, because it will not accept from other people what their hearts break for carrying; and I shall always hate her, sorry for her though I am, and respect her though I do, because she has always spurned your tenderness and trampled your compassion. This was for him such a long speech that I have remembered it word for word, and also because it is what I have felt sometimes when she has been impatient with me.

Well, it has been beautiful in its way, and at least it has been different, this month in Wales. I shall always remember it.

September 23.

We are going home to-morrow. It is over. Good-bye to my little house under the trees, and Lisbet, and the sugar-loaf peaks opposite my window, and the queer, unfriendly Welsh people. And good-bye to my journal, for I will write no more, it is only to make tears for my own eyes, for no one else reads, and heaven forefend they should. I will not tell more, for there will be nothing to tell; it is, after all, a very barren confidence we give to these leaves, to whisper in our own ears secrets which become no lighter for being shared with ourselves. So when we set out to-morrow I shall have written to this book:

Ohe, iam satis est, ohe, libelle.

(But it was plain that she had broken this resolve; for there followed one blank leaf, and one on which were sketched a few heads of flowers, and maple leaves, and the profile of a caryatid on a Greek pillar; and next, though they did not at first observe the betraying edge, another leaf had been cut out. After this the script resumed.)

December 18.

Harry observed me writing in this book again, and suggested that I should at least continue my journal in so far as to write down whatever happened of importance. He says we might make a book of it later on; a strange book it would be, for half of it is missing. It seemed strange that I should leave it untouched so long, and happen upon it just in time to record the return of Patrick. Yes, he has come home in more senses than one, for he has come back to us in Providence, and since Harry

brought him home from the hunt like a ghost from the past, has been with us three times, and we wait for him now. We are all glad of his return, for the old house was desolate, and Harry has hinted that the stewardship has not been of the best while Patrick was in Ireland. I did not know, until he came back so unexpectedly, with what warmth my family thought of him. Harry cannot praise or serve him enough, or sufficiently sound his glory to me when we are alone at nights, after he has been here. My father always admired him, not seeing, I fear, how much greater of mind and scholarship he is, or he would have belittled rather than lauded him. It is undutiful to say so, but it is true. Most surprising of all, I discover Mama has a spot for him softer than any she keeps for me.

He is coming to dine with us on Christmas Day, and one morning, but I do not yet know when, we are to ride out to Harry's farm and inspect his horses. He has a colt he is hopeful of racing next season, and some other items of more interest to himself than to me, and also a most beautiful creature who has all but been the death of one of his stable-boys. He is anxious to get rid of this stallion, but only to someone who knows the truth of him, for Harry is the most honourable soul alive. I was silly enough to cry out at once that it must not be to Patrick; and he answered very fervently that he would not sell the brute to his friend for all the money on earth.

December 23.

They were at the farm to-day. I did not go; I had a headache, and also my mother was even worse than usual, and needed though she did not want me. To-night Harry told me that Patrick has been riding Marquis. It was his own wish. I should have known that he would love that exquisite and dreadful creature at sight, and would

not rest until he had been astride him. I remember our old rides together. They seem four days past rather than four years. He was afraid of no horse that ever was foaled. I hope and pray that he will forget this one. We must make him, for risk him we dare not.

December 26.

Well, the dearest day of the year is over and gone once more. There was no snow, but a white frost, when we went to church in the early morning, before ever it was light; and I was happy, for I had more to thank God for than anyone knows, and what hour could be more blessed for thanksgiving than the hour of the Lord's nativity? Then and now I feel again my life at the flood. I am still young. We were grown stagnant in our little world, even Harry is not the Harry of our marriage day; the future does not often trouble him now if the present is happy and prosperous. As for me, I am grown a fashionable lady, I wonder he knew me under these curls and laces, though my heart is in no way changed.

He came to-day, as he had said he would come, and we were very merry, even my mother seemed to be free of her shadow for one day. We sang carols, and the choir also waited upon us, and we sustained them with hot pies and punch, which I think were very welcome. And indeed, I think we have laughed ourselves into forgetfulness. There is more merriment toward. On New Year's Eve we are going all together to the Camber ball.

Now I am here at my desk, and it is midnight, and Harry is fast asleep behind me, like a child. He has lost all the urgency of his need for me now, I believe, though I do not doubt he loves me still. Before I married him I was like a river wasting in the sand, for he was my valley, and I could quench no thirst but his; and now that this

ease has come over all his eagerness I am in the desert again. What can one do for the world when there is no rest but in giving? What can one do who has not power nor worldliness nor strength nor temperament to do away evils, one who shrinks from the show of giving, and yet cannot be at peace? Is it enough to be still and love? Is it enough to sit as I am sitting now, alone in my world, and suffer my love to flow like a fountain out of my heart? Will it not find a goal somewhere in another heart, now or in another century, I do not care. For indeed I can do no more than love, it is the only gift I have to offer. There is no part of me is real but only this. It cannot be all to no purpose.

January 1.

Well—this is but a word for good night and good morrow both, for it is four o'clock in the morning, and we are just going to bed—we have given 1838 a rousing welcome. We have almost danced the shoes from our feet. I cannot keep awake any longer. God send you a kind year, my dear love.

January 2.

Patrick has hunted Marquis. It is madness. I can think of nothing else since Harry told me. I never hunt, I like the little red foxes far too well; and my mother being for once confined to her bed, I did not even go to the meet, for which I do not know whether to be glad or sorry now, for if I had gone, and seen the mount he had chosen, I should certainly either have dissuaded him and spoiled his day, or held my tongue and spoiled my own. Even now that the day is safely over, and he is come home lean and hungry as Cassius, and sound as Harry himself, I shudder to think of what he has done. I wish Harry would sell the brute quickly, to someone who will

take him hundreds of miles away, I shall not have a quiet moment while he is here to trouble us.

They drew the spinneys along Camber Fields, but did not find. I think of all those trees waiting and leaning for him, and that angry blazed face with the red eyes and flat ears for ever in rage and humiliation; and I am sick with fear even now, though it is all over, and I hear him laughing with Harry in the hall. They found at Brockle Hill, where the woods are brown with badger earths, and the run was a long one, and over rough country, and only for a loss at the end of it, for which I am very glad, the quarry going to earth somewhere beyond the brook, in the thickest of the woods. But thanks be to God, they are safe home, and one day of venturing at least is over. There is no ill to show for it but a great deal of mud and a torn coat, the latter being Harry's, it is burst at the shoulder, and I must remember to mend it before Thursday next, when the hounds meet again; but this time in Patrick's country, so he will be host, and his mount will be from his own stables.

I am going down to them now, they will have finished with the wine, for which neither of them cares overmuch. My father is out at church with the choir, the boys try him sorely with their wrong notes, though I fear he is even less musical than they. On Sunday he proposes to tell us of the nature of hell, so I shall be warned in time, and take my little Latin missal with me to read in the sermon. I am a very undutiful daughter, I know, but the little illuminated pictures are so charming, and it is more profit just to sit and look at them than to hear about hell, in which I do not believe, so it would be waste of time listening. It is easy to read in our church, because the pews are high, and I have a large muff which will hold two or three books at a pinch. Sometimes I take one for

Harry, too, he would not in the least mind flaunting it before everyone, but we must consider my poor father a little. I fear it all sounds very childish, but no one will ever read it, so what does it matter?

January 20.

Since last I wrote there has been snow, and now we are almost marooned in Providence, until someone comes to dig us out we cannot open the door. It is not so much the actual weight of the fall, but it has drifted and frozen fast. I have a fire in my bedroom, and am toasting my toes this moment, having just finished washing up after a breakfast I cooked myself; for as we cannot get out, neither can our little maid get in, indeed I think it very brave of her to venture out at all. She has gone to fetch some of the men who are clearing the street, and I suppose we shall be free in an hour at most.

So it seems likely there will be no hunting, after all. I am not sorry, though Harry is fuming.

January 29.

To-morrow we are all three riding to Harry's farm, and I fear Marquis may be under discussion again, for I see by Patrick's eyes that he covets him dearly. Harry laughs at my fears, for Patrick has ridden the beast half a dozen times now, and come to no harm. None the less, I shall be happier when to-morrow is safely over, and I can thank God that——

(Here for the third time a leaf was missing, and after it the new day began strangely with the note of an irretrievable ending.)

February 3.

I have no heart to write, and yet I will tell what is to be told. It is very little. They buried him yesterday. His

cousin was late in arriving, but came in time for the church service. I did not go. I have not looked upon him since the night he died, those four days ago which seemed four years in passing, and seem but four seconds now. I have not been to the grave, nor I shall not go. As God sees me—for I was never more conscious of His compassionate eyes than I am now—I do not wish to remember that there was any mortal part in him; but I will keep my thoughts from this time forth for that essence of him which I shall see again in another land, when I am delivered of this land from which he is departed. I know my part in this orgy of mourning which lies upon Providence; it is not to make sonorous sentences in epitaph, as my father does, nor to reproach God with my mother, nor to rage all the night in helpless grief, like my poor Harry; but it is to be what, thanks to the great loneliness from which I breathe my consolation, I can well be, silent and at rest, and to bid myself, as I bid Patrick in farewell:

Requiescat in pace.

February 9.

Arthur Mundy has been here, to bring me a book which he has found among Patrick's personal possessions, and which he says belongs now by right to me. Now that I have read in it, what can I do but thank him for his understanding and gentleness? Whatever rights the living have in this book are mine. It is——

(And there ended, before half of the book was filled, the journal of Damaris Belgaine, who had been Damaris Ferne; but between the last sad words in that round hand, and the blank leaves over which her grandson had scribbled his drawings, three more leaves were cut from their place.)

XXII

A PRINCESS OF THE CITY

JULIAN closed the book. There was a long silence. Patrick did not stir. His hands, poised above the transparent forearms, hid his face. Julian withdrew himself quietly from the borders of the cone of light, and crossing to the window, opened it full, and gulped in air from which the savour of the past had not departed. His throat was dry, his eyes burned; it was that miserable hotness under the eyelids, he supposed, which suddenly carried his mind back to the few desolate moments of his childhood, those brief and reasonless occasions when the solitary boy had passionately desired not to be solitary, and the imaginative mind had turned in terror and run from its own imaginings. Their rarity made them, in remembrance, more immediate and poignant, so that he felt the stifling shadow clutch at him again. He leaned his forehead upon his hand in the open window and looked at the jagged pattern of old St. Julian's, and the whole of it seemed meaningless. Whatever was the philosopher's stone by means of which he touched his world into coherence, for the moment it had slipped from his hand. He thought with a sick languor: "What does it all mean? What is there he or I can do about it?"

He turned and looked at the figure at the desk; and the only real, indomitable thing which remained to him gathered like a cloud about his friend, a tenderness no longer without object.

"Will you believe," said Patrick Mundy, in a very low voice, "that I feel her here beside me now? It is the very trick of her voice, the very turn of her thought. But oh, God, what does it do for me? To give me so much and so little——"

At the first word Julian's vision righted itself. The light and the dark swung each into its place; even the fat moth which clung heavily round the lamp-shade had a significance not symbolic, but direct. The world he saw and the world he did not see put on once more their immense and unanimous reality.

"Grant that this is her proper hand," said Patrick, "grant that it raises her in my eyes as vividly as she was in life, grant that she wept for me, that pity was not out of her scope, that she was a woman, if you will. How am I helped?"

Julian stood still, watching the moth flutter its neutral-tinted wings in a soft drumming against the parchment shade. He said, in a voice of equal quiet and much more calm:

"So little, and so much. Not a word her husband could not have read, and yet between the lines so much of what you could not give me—her soul. And that has never belonged to him, not for one moment out of all the nights and days they lived together. 'Harry is the dearest companion in the world——' 'My poor Harry——' But does she anywhere, even to herself, admit that she loved him? Oh, she was fond of him, fonder perhaps than of anyone else, but love him as I mean love—heart and mind and soul—no, she never deceived herself so. And surely," said Julian passionately, "you can't doubt any longer that she had a soul? The woman who wrote, 'I will keep my thoughts from this time forth for that essence of him which I shall see again in another land.'" His voice shook, and he fell silent.

"No," said Patrick slowly, "no, I cannot doubt any longer that she was what I wished her to be, a pure saint of God, as tender and faithful as even love could desire her. I cannot doubt that she is safe in the City of God,

and the choicest pearl of it. I cannot doubt that she is in everlasting happiness—as I am in everlasting damnation. Nor hope—can you ask me to hope—that I shall ever see her again.” He leaped suddenly to his feet, and in their deep settings his eyes glittered like the tormented sea under a high wind. Movement was in them, a swirling like water; but their blueness was blinding bright. “Julian, for the love of God, why do you stand there looking at me like that, with your mild eyes? Do you care what comes to me? Then tell me what you know, tell me, tell me what ground you have for going on hoping, tell me what little grain of comfort you find in all this, for as I am dead and damned I can see none.”

“Is it nothing,” said Julian hotly, “that she should be in heaven?”

“It is a great deal, and you know it.” But the mournful mouth smiled now with a dark affection. “To you,” he said more gently, “it would be everything, the world delivered into your hand. But to me it is only a great joy, and a far greater pain. What is the ecstasy of the saints in light to me in my hell? Answer me that, Julian Sears.”

“But listen, you go too fast for me,” said Julian. “I never pretended to work miracles. All I ask is that you shall help me.” He came back to the desk, and lifted the book in his hands. “Let’s finish with speculations, and come to what we know. We know that there are leaves cut out of this journal—six of them. Why? They were written as she came to them, for the sentences break off and begin midway. They were cut out, then, afterwards. *She* cut them out. Who else would? Who else would want to? Damaris cut them out—burned them or hid them, I don’t know which.”

“Why should she do either?” cried Patrick Mundy.

"Because she did not wish Harry to read them, of course. Because in them she had done what she told him she did not do—betrayed her inmost mind, the sanctuary which he—he above all—must not desecrate."

"But why?—why? Whether she married him for love or comfort, at least she trusted him with most of her mind."

"All the more reason she should not want him hurt. I wonder," said Julian with longing, "I wonder what it was she could not bear that he should know? Something so strong in her that she could not keep it always buried—something which even after her death Harry could not be allowed to see. She was very loyal, your Damaris. He was still her poor Harry to the day she died, and after, for she went on protecting him all his life."

"Protecting him from what?" asked Patrick, no longer in disbelief, but in eagerness. He clutched at Julian's arm, and shook it in his hands, and repeated: "Protecting him from what, Julian?"

"I wish I knew." He opened the book again, and ran the pages through his fingers. "Where do they come, these missing leaves? The first on the eve of her marriage. The second on your return to Providence Cottage. The third must have recorded your death. And all the rest follow the gift of your poems—that is, the discovery that you loved her." He raised his head, and met the tormented eyes full. "Doesn't it seem, Patrick, that there's much of you in all this? Were you not there, close to the heart of her secret, from the beginning to the end? 'Whatever rights the living have in this book are mine.' Oh, I wonder, I wonder! I wish we knew. If only we had those six leaves! If only we could see——"

And instantly, as if his questing voice had pierced a veil which covered her, he did see. He saw a silent girl

sitting in the grass above Caradoc's Camp, watching the shining undulations of that enchanted sea in a dream, with hands folded in her lap, and eyes fixed; not, as he had once seen her, in quiescence, but for ever in the midst of a sea of her own, in expectancy, in joy, in wonder. He saw her left in Harry's company, with hardly a day's leave-taking, hardly a word of good-bye; saw her riding with Harry, walking with Harry in the garden, dancing with Harry, her hand in his warm hand, before her eyes his vivid, adoring face, and ever and always in her ears the pleading and argument of his voice. This for a year; she had waited a full year. He saw her a wife who hated the business of her marriage, who cared nothing for her beauty, and who yet could write of her husband: "Harry is the dearest companion in the world, I must not ever disappoint him by word or look." He saw, with a strange pain, that in its way her affection for Harry had been perfect. But another Damaris blotted out for him the vision of the loving wife. She stood, this fine lady, upon the landing, beside the table laden with candles, her black hair cascading in curls upon her neck, her foaming skirts filling the stairway, and stared down upon a darker shadow among the shadows of the hall, and called by his name a man whom she had not seen for four years. He heard now the unguarded sweetness of that cry:

"Patrick!"

"God help us both for blind, brainless fools!" said Julian, clenching his hands upon the edge of the desk. "She loved you."

He knew that he had spoken as an oracle, that he had said something which changed the world. He stood up, with one hand covering his eyes that he might see her the better.

"Yes, she loved you. Can you doubt it? Doesn't it make everything plain? All her silences, all her gaieties, her kiss for your dead lips, her tears for your dead songs, her cry to you that night on the stairs, her desire for death at the last, everything you've told me of her, everything she has written of herself. She stood in the candle-light, you in the darkness; she was not looking for you, she had not seen nor heard of you for four years; and she cried: 'Patrick!' And it told you nothing. You fool, you fool," shouted Julian, hammering his clenched fist against the inlay of the desk, "*she loved you.*"

There had been no sound but his voice, not even a strangled moan as soft as the wind's sighing; but Patrick Mundy's head lay in his doubled arms upon the smooth desk where she had written his epitaph, and the fingers of one thin hand were rigid in his hair. Julian embraced the bowed shoulders, and they were still under his arm. He whispered:

"You shall find her—I swear it. If it wears out my lifetime and many a lifetime after, yet you shall find her——"

The wind rose against the open window, and he heard, as if from far away, the rustling of the lilacs, the whispers of leaves and rattling of dry brown seed-boxes. The little clock upon the tallboy caught its breath, and gave out solemnly the single chime of the half-hour. It was half-past nine. The recollection of time stirred in Julian, uneasily as a dream, and struggling back into his heart upon its heels, only in part acknowledged, only imperfectly understood, came other things, music unheard and unexplained, ghostly violins which gave forth no sound as they were played, a fountain half-lit, half in darkness, a Triton with a broken horn to his lips, a voice saying: "Good-bye"—Margaret.

XXIII

A LIGHTED ROOM

MARGARET waited beside the rim of the fountain in East Square until there was no longer any possibility of Julian's coming. She was bitterly disappointed, but nothing more; for the first thought that came to her was that he had been called out to a case at the last moment, too late to be able to ring up and explain, and too urgently to be able to send any messenger. There was nothing strange in that; it had happened not once, but many times since she had worn Julian's ring, and she was happily incapable of grudging him to those who needed him. None the less, a coldness descended upon her mind. There would be little pleasure and no rest in the concert now; better by far to quiet that uneasiness within herself, at whatever cost to her pride or his already insecure trust of her. She waited until the Town Hall clock showed a quarter to nine, and then turned her back upon the Triton's discoloured head, and crossed East Square towards Queen Street.

The moon was rising, and to westward the sun had not yet entirely vanished; but under the lolling balconies and swinging wire flower-baskets of Julian's Alley she walked in a purple gloom. The "Red Harry" was lit, its broad door open beneath the sign, and from one window drifted a worn but still sweet tenor voice singing "Sweet Genevieve" to the company within, from another the bubbling of a dance band playing the anæmic jazz of the moment. She passed by both, and the narrow passage received her. Between the walls a small, unexpected wind met her squarely, mounding the skirt of her dress against instep and knee and thigh, a cold touch,

lifting her uncovered hair from her ears, filling the cup of her throat with coolness. She stood at the edge of Eden Close, and looked at Providence Cottage.

The house was dark, within and without, as if it were asleep in the twilight; but Margaret knew that there was a soul in it which never slept. Its very stillness chilled her. She went softly across the Close, and let herself in by the gate still dazzling in its new green paint, and approached the door. What kept her in such quietness she did not know, unless it was some instinct of that mutual distrust which so deeply burdened her. She thought of all the questions she had framed and never asked, and was afraid suddenly of the very hand she raised to the latch. The door would be locked, she was sure, and Julian somewhere in the town; if she found it so she would be satisfied. But when she lifted the latch stealthily, and tested it with barely the weight of her hand behind it, the door was not locked; it yielded, and she looked into the empty, darkening hall.

Margaret stood hesitant on the threshold for a moment, wondering at the beating of her heart. Then she drew the door close again, and walking carefully upon the grass verge, passed the iris window, passed the dining-room and the lounge, all dark and still, and came to the west face of the house. And there she halted, under the shadows at the edge of the orchard, staring upward. There was a light in Julian's room.

Her first instinct was to run back to the hall and let herself in, and ask for an explanation; but before she could so far trust herself, a shadow had crossed the light, and Julian was leaning in the open window with his hand to his forehead, staring out far over her head towards Old St. Julian's. She could see his face clearly, so well did she know every line of it; it seemed to her now troubled

beyond words, and yet by no material cares, rather as if he had lost his own life than been in fear for another's. Terror and pain filled Margaret's heart; this was a face he kept from her, and showed only to the solitudes of Caradoc's Camp and Old St. Julian's, to the haunted gravestones and too dearly-loved relics of the dead. She watched, and its wild perplexity did not change. She knew then that she must not go to him, that with the wings of the morning to carry her she could not reach his world, that with the voice of the stars in space she could not speak his language. She was outdistanced; all the powers of the mind fought against her. And if the pace was not for her, what right had she to ask him to slacken?

Then she heard, out of the depths of the room behind him, a voice speaking. It had a native resonance, which should have made its every word carry clear to her ears, but it was pitched now on a low note which she felt to be unnatural to it, so that she received only the sound, a swift and desperate sound which flowed without a break. As it commenced Julian dropped his arm, and all the doubt seemed to be dissolved from his face in the moment before he turned from the window. She heard him answer in a voice as low as the former voice, and then he was gone, and she could see only his shadow moving monstrous about the ceiling of the room. Not a word had reached her; she wanted no word. Already she dreaded the revelation as deeply as she had desired it.

She crept back through the silent garden, and made her way alone to the Guildhall, and entered it alone. Her seats were at the back and near the door, and only the few people who were nearest observed her arrival. Almost half of the programme was already over, and the Italian tenor was singing "Bois Epais", and singing it

exquisitely, as she sat down and threw her coat back from her shoulders.

*If that never more this broken heart may enfold her,
If no more these eyes may behold her,
For ever more I hate the light.*

She did not hear it; then and afterwards she remembered none of it; for in the heart of the sound her own heart dwelt in a cavern of silence like the taut stillness at the centre of a whirlwind; and she thought only, in a fever:

"What am I to do? What can I do? Go to him and beg him to take me into his confidence? Demand to share his secrets? I can't do that. I don't own him. Tell him, then, all I know and all I suspect, and that I can't endure this exile any longer. Say I never was jealous of his work, I never wanted to rob his friends, even the friends he dreamed. Say I was content with the love he gave me, but now I daren't be content. Ask him to give me as a favour what I never claimed as a right. But I can't do that, either, because I know he would refuse, and that would mean good-bye. Well, why not? If this is all the use I am to him, better I should let him go. If I love him so much, I ought to be able to do a little thing like that for him. No, not that—any humiliation, but not that. Then what am I to do? What can I do?—"

She tapped her fingers upon the arm of the seat to the cadence of farandole. Behind her tearless eyes her mind was like a fire, and in the midst of it all her plentiful peace lay now a handful of ashes.

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XXIV

MARGARET IN PROVIDENCE COTTAGE

HE rang her up next morning, just as she was gathering up Mrs. Cator's letters from the tray in the hall. She had been half-expecting the call, and her hand did not tremble as she lifted the receiver. She could even have hazarded a broadly-accurate guess at what he would have to say.

"Hullo, is it Julian?"

"Yes, I'm terribly sorry, Margaret, about last night. I had to tell you, I knew I could be sure of finding you at this hour. I was out very late, on a case."

"I see," said Margaret, with no bitterness. "A bad case, I suppose? Life or death——" She smiled wryly at the letters in her hand, and turned her thumb downwards upon the table.

"Yes," said Julian, after a brief hesitation. "Yes, you're right—it was a matter of life and death."

"And which is it to be?"

"Life—I hope and believe."

His voice had caught the infection; he could talk to her in riddles of an enthusiasm so great that she felt dwarfed before it.

"I'm glad," she said steadily, and could still feel some pleasure in the knowledge that she had said only what was true. There would, thank God, always be pleasure for her in the prospering of any labour of his.

"I know, and I do thank you for being glad, but I still feel horribly guilty, leaving you to stand and wait for me like that."

"No need, my dear, you did what you had to do, of course. I wouldn't ask you ever to step aside from it to save me a disappointment. You know that."

"Oh, yes, I—but it was a disappointment——"

"Yes, I'm admitting that. Would you rather I denied it? But I knew you had good reason for abandoning me." That also was true, though the reason wore no form but a look in Julian's eyes, and a tone in his voice, and a sonnet, and a gravestone, and a desperate pleading within a lighted room.

"Then you do forgive me?"

"What a question, Julian, to me! Have I travelled as far as all that?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Julian in bleak wonder.

"I'm sorry, I don't exactly know myself."

An awkward silence, and then he asked unhappily: "Did you enjoy the concert?"

"What I heard of it—which was only the second half of the programme, you see."

"Then however long did you wait for me? Oh, Margaret, I can't tell you how mean I feel——"

"Do you mind if we don't discuss it now? I'm coming to Charleworth to-morrow, and we can talk then; there's—rather a lot to say."

A pause, and his voice suddenly guarded and slow: "Very well, if you put it like that; until to-morrow, then."

"Good-bye, Julian!"

But he did not answer in kind. The hateful word stuck in his throat, and he hung up the receiver without uttering it. A superstitious dread fell upon him, though he had said "Good-bye, Margaret," in the same way a hundred times, and thought nothing of it. Now it bit too deep. For there had been something in Margaret, ever since that visit to Old St. Julian's, which had frightened him in the ominous manner of a good-bye. Being in her company had assumed the character of looking into a

mirror, and seeing a stranger face to face. And yet she had not changed, to him or to anyone. Julian's mind, attempting to understand too many things at one and the same time, succeeded only in wasting itself into as many distresses. He spent an unhappy day, longing for and hating the morrow.

It was raining heavily when Margaret stepped from the train at Charleworth on Wednesday afternoon. The streets into which she walked at Julian's side were shining with their own lambence, so that the earth seemed brighter than the sky, and her transparent red mackintosh, clear and streaming with water, bloomed a rustling rose above a silent rose as they climbed the rise of Hill Street to East Square. The fountain splashed mournfully among the scudding rain, and only a few wretched shoppers, hampered with baskets and umbrellas, passed from pavement to pavement by its Tritons and shells without a glance. Margaret walked, as ever, the top of her head on a level with Julian's eyes when he turned to look at her, her hands in her pockets, a strand of hair whipped from under her beret, and flaunting like a banner from the point of her widow's peak. Julian kept his eyes on her, she hers upon the road ahead; and neither of them, after the first phrases of meeting, had a word to say.

From the moment that they entered Providence Cottage, the uneasiness of Patrick Mundy fell about them. Julian felt his presence so intensely that he could have laid a hand upon his arm at any moment he chose, without sight or sound to guide him; and sometimes he thought he saw for a moment, even in the light of afternoon, the shadowy outlines of some part of him moving about the room; once his head and shoulders against the dark panelling like a drift of smoke; once, his arm flung across the colours of the window; and often his eyes,

gaunt, and dark, wandering from Margaret to Julian, from Julian to Margaret, in anxiety for both.

Margaret did not speak of anything but trivialities until she had washed up after tea, and they were sitting in one of the alcoves of the hall, she in the window-seat with her ankles crossed in the cushions, he at the book-table, half-obscured by a bowl of yellow daisies. Then she stopped suddenly in the middle of a casual remark, and turned her eyes to his face.

"Julian——" she said, and her voice slipped off-key.

"Yes?"

Her right hand began to play nervously with her engagement ring, the modest flower of pearls spinning into her palm and out again as she twisted it. "Julian, I was here on Monday night."

"Here?" said Julian, stiffening.

"In the garden. I waited until a quarter to nine, and you didn't come, so I came to see if you were here. I tried the door, and it was unlocked. Then I walked round into the garden, and saw the light in your room. I was standing there under the trees all the while you were at the window. I heard you talking to—who ever was here with you." She saw his lips open in desperate search for a lie swift enough and feasible enough to bend the sword of her reasoning, and sprang suddenly upright in her corner. "Don't, Julian," she cried urgently. "Don't you see that you've done enough? That's what frightens me. That's how I know there's something big at stake. It must be very big to make you distrust me so much. Very big and very strange, to make you lie to me."

"What I told you yesterday——" began Julian feverishly.

"I'm not thinking only of yesterday. Let me tell you everything I know, Julian, before you say anything more.

You remember the day we went to Caradoc's Camp, and I told you about Patrick Mundy's book. There were so many things strange about you that day. It was strange that you asked me to meet you there, instead of coming here; and you were so abstracted, and so nervy—you jumped when I touched you—and you said something very odd; not to me, not to anyone or anything that I could see. You said: 'Oh, God, have you followed me here?' Wasn't that enough to set me thinking? Oh, I know you explained it away very nicely; only, you see, it didn't go away. And then again, the sonnet you claimed as yours. It wasn't yours, of course. Did you think I should believe that?"

She quoted, and her voice was unsteady of key once more:

*True pilgrimage of heaven, at last begin;
Great Heart of God, open and let me in.*

You see, I know you too well not to know when you lie to me; and besides, you do it so badly, not having had much practice yet, I suppose. Well, there was the sonnet you didn't write. And there was Old St. Julian's, every second of it, from the time that we went in. The very way you moved about, almost as if you were a blind man being led; and the way you went straight as an arrow to Patrick Mundy's grave. And then, last night—you don't know, you can't know, how you looked to me when you came to the window. I know we've talked of re-making the world—the ordinary, hopeless dreams, everyone has them—but you seemed to be looking at a mountain you had to move, and knowing it would cost you more than your life, and still believing you could do it. And I loved you for it. But it set me a million miles away from you; and that's where I am now."

Julian rose and went to her side. Even three yards between them just then was more than he could bear. He picked up the hands which lay relaxed in her lap, and they were cold in his, without a tremor in the slender length of the fingers. They were her one unquestionable beauty, those hands; he remembered hearing her say it as one remembers a quotation from a lost author, without reference to place or time or context, like a saying of an oracle.

"Margaret, if you love me——"

"I do, but it doesn't help me. I love you just as well from a million miles away. I believe I love you better."

"At least go on trusting me a little while longer. Don't ask me anything, dear, and forget that I told you lies——"

"As if all that matters! You know I'm not caring about my rights. You know I'm not angry because you failed to turn up. It isn't that at all. But you have admitted that there's something to hide?"

"I'm admitting nothing, except that I have been worried about something quite personal, and probably quite passing."

"Julian," she said in sudden terror, her fingers contracting on his, "you're not ill?"

"No, I'm not ill, and I'm not mad. I'm admitting nothing. I'm simply begging you to forget all this, and go on trusting me. I give you my word there's nothing wrong."

"But, you see, I don't believe that. The time's past when you could have persuaded me I was dreaming. I know there's something very great risen between us."

"Dear," he said desperately, "I swear you're making mountains out of molehills."

"The mountain you're going to move?" She withdrew one of her hands, and on an impulse of longing and tenderness touched his white cheek. She smiled, but her very smile was haunted. "No, that's none of my making. But I'm not trying to turn your mind back from it, not even back to me. God forbid I should. I want you always to be what you are to me now, the dearest person I've ever known. I want you never to turn back from any labour of Hercules, however hard and costly. I want you to go on fighting the powers of darkness all your life. If I could be in the fight beside you there's nothing I'd like better; but I can't. I know that now. There are people who just aren't meant to tie themselves to other people." Julian opened his lips to make a wild answer, and she put her hand quickly and gently over them, and held him silent. "No, don't speak yet. You don't think it's easy for me, do you? But I don't want to be a millstone round your neck. I won't let you check to keep pace with me. And it would mean that. The fact that you so much as hesitated about confiding in me, let alone put me off with lies, proves it. I know you didn't mean to show me how inadequate I was; I know you never even thought of it in that way; I know—if you want me to say it—that you never stopped loving me for a moment. But that isn't the point. Consciously or unconsciously, you showed me where I stand. So I say, and I'm not afraid to say it: Love you as I do, I can't keep up with you; go on alone."

She had never, in all his memories of her, spoken so long or so nakedly: nor looked so drained at the end of speaking. He said, white-faced and staring:

"Margaret, you can't know what you're saying!"

"I do, Julian."

"But you can't leave me. Don't speak of such things;

don't think of them. Go on alone? I should be lame without you."

"Is that why you were afraid to tell me the truth? Why you wanted to protect me from it? Oh, I knew it was for me. What else could it all mean? And you were right, I am afraid of it, and I hate myself for it. So, after all, what is there to say?"

Julian found the only effective answer by the instinct of a wounded animal for refuge. He carried her hand to his cheek, and muttered into the palm: "If you leave me I shall be desperately unhappy."

"I dare say you will," said Margaret composedly; but her face was shaken. "So shall I. But I can't go on like this any longer."

"And I can't go on without you. I thought you knew—though we've been too busy to talk about it much—I thought you knew that I love you more than anything on earth—and value you higher. If I lose you, I'm done for, and that's the simple truth, Margaret."

"Prove it, then," said Margaret. "Tell me what the mountain is; tell me who was here with you on Monday night, and who wrote the sonnet, and who followed you to Caradoc's Camp. And I'll believe I'm useful, after all."

Julian sat back and looked at her, and all his resolution melted. He drew a deep breath and opened his lips to pour out the whole story into her receptive compassion; and the hand of Patrick Mundy closed upon his wrist so suddenly and convulsively that he started wildly at the touch, and uttered a cry scarcely loud enough to be heard. Yet Margaret heard it, for he saw her brace herself to meet it, saw her mouth contract and her eyes darken with controlled but deadly fear. He looked down at the hand, and saw clearly the two rings shining, the marriage

rings of the heart and soul of Damaris. He looked back at his own love, and saw it beautiful and complete, but as remote as the moon. For a moment he felt within himself a great pain flowering; then he said:

"But there's nothing to tell. There's no secret, except that I've been overworking, or so they tell me. There's no mountain to be moved, except perhaps a mountain of nerve trouble, if I'm not careful. It's true I've been studying Patrick Mundy; Euan Pryce has told me quite a lot about him, and even found me that last sonnet to copy into the book. And as for Monday night, the plain truth is I forgot about our concert in the excitement of hunting in the crypt of Old St. Julian's for the fragments of St. Luke's picture. Euan Pryce came home with me afterwards, when the light was too bad for us to see any longer. It was his voice you heard in my room."

It was too late to retract, even if he had wished to; but he knew at once, by the level stare with which she watched him, and by the silence she kept, that she did not believe a single word of it. If she had been willing to accept the explanation she would have said at once: "Then why make all this mystery about it?" Instead she stirred slowly and swung her feet down to the floor, and said at last, with downcast eyes and in a curiously flat voice:

"As simple as that! Then perhaps I've been making a fool of myself, after all."

Julian had nothing to say. He was busy with his own resolutions, which seemed fluid in his mind, beating like an angry river against her unbelief upon the one hand, and Patrick Mundy's invisible distress upon the other. The fingers kept their hold upon his wrist; both hands were there now, playing round his own with their restless touch of panic. It was a strange sensation, and strangely it

comforted him, so that he watched Margaret rise and cross the room without making any attempt to stay her.

"Better forget about it, perhaps," she said, reaching for her beret. "If you can. Let's call it an illusion on my part, shall we? I'm afraid I shall have to go now, or I shall miss the train."

"I'm coming to the station with you," said Julian.

"Not this time. Do you mind? I'd rather you didn't. Besides, you haven't time to walk there and back before surgery."

As he helped her into her mackintosh he asked urgently: "You'll come as usual next week, Margaret?"

"I don't know. I don't know quite what I am doing. I'm sorry if I've worried you, too; it wasn't what I meant."

"No, of course not; but please promise to come next week."

"Oh, very well, I'll come," she said wearily. She turned up her collar and tucked the stray strands of hair out of sight. "Now I really must go. Good-bye, Julian." She raised her face.

He kissed her. Her lips were cold and steady. He knew then that he had damned himself beyond redemption, and it hurt him more than he had thought he could be hurt. He watched her walk down the gravel path and open the gate, and march across the Close; and it was borne in upon him that in spite of her promise she would never come back, never by any power of her own heart or his, never in this world or another, as the Margaret she had been. The thought was too awful to be borne. He cried out: "Margaret, Margaret!" but she was already out of earshot. There was only one way to save himself, and that was to tell her the truth, and show her the proofs of it. He would give her the journal of Damaris Belgaine, and

she should read for herself. Anything rather than this unresisting loss.

He turned and ran blindly for the stairs. An arm now entirely visible was stretched across his body to hold him back, but he flung it off, and dashed up the hollow treads with hands groping on either side, and tore at the drawer of the little writing-desk. It was locked. He had locked it himself, and fastened the key upon the ring which held his surgery keys, and where it was now he had not time nor composure to remember. He wrenched at the drawer furiously, bracing his hands against the top of the desk. In the borders of his consciousness the voice of Patrick panted in anger and distress:

"Julian, you can't do that. I forbid you—I won't let you do it. It's her property—hers, do you understand? It's not yours to share. Damn you, leave her rest in peace."

The arms wrestled with him, and they were strong, and the sobbing voice was stronger still to beat him down. He braced his arms in a last effort, and the flimsy desk-top broke away in his hand and fell against the wall with a shattering of its inlay and a shower of mother-of-pearl flakes like frost. He stood there leaning over the open drawer, with its treasures of St. Luke and of Damaris; and behind it he saw another drawer, not so wide nor so deep, fitted into the rear of the desk with a coiled spring at its back.

All thought of Margaret went from him. He put his fingers into the lock, and forced it back, and drew the drawer from its place; and instantly the spring, expanding, shot the second drawer forward with such force that its contents leaped out and unrolled at his feet.

There was an explosion of perfume, the essences of dried rose-leaves a century old; and Julian stood staring down at a handful of dry brown petals, and a long festoon

of grey chiffon half-unfolded, and a few faded leaves of paper, rolled one within another, in the heart of the coil.

XXV

A GAUZE SCARF AND SIX LEAVES OF A JOURNAL

THERE was for the moment no realisation in him. He stood in a stupor of despair rather than wonder, watching the grey folds settle like mist; but Patrick sprang past him with a passionate cry and gathered up the bundle to his breast, and fondled it with his trembling hands, whispering: "Damaris—Damaris——"

"What is it?" asked Julian, excitement taking his heart; and in asking, instantly he knew. He stretched out his hands. "Let me see. It can't be true! Do you mean I've been living with them, sleeping with them——"

He felt the plucking of time past upon his mind, like the agonising drag of air plunging over a precipice. He had not meant to forget Margaret, but it was not at Margaret he was looking now, as he received the bundle into his hands. The chiffon felt dry and powdery upon his palms, and clouds of fine dust rose from it as it stirred under his breath. There was so little weight in it that it billowed upward at his lightest movement, grey as the rain outside the window, and of hardly more substance. The whole of it would have passed in its prime through the eye of a large needle, though the delicate silk tore now at a touch. He lifted the end of it, and found a small, irregular stain about a foot from the hem, a rough circle of brown so dull as to be almost colourless. He touched it, and it fell to dust, leaving frayed edges standing. Paying the length of it through his hands, he came upon growing copies of the blot, each doubling the former

one, and each, as he drew nearer the rustling roll of paper, more completely rotted into powder. He breathed it, and it was musty and sweet in his nostrils, like the spices used to preserve dead bodies. Over the shining dust he looked at Patrick Mundy.

"Yes," said the poet, bitterly smiling, "it is my blood. The only thing left of me in all the world. My blood upon her scarf, and her secrets in the heart of it."

"I was right, then," said Julian in triumph. "She hid them. Perhaps she couldn't burn them. Perhaps she was caught here with the cut leaves in her hand, and had only time to thrust them out of his sight—on the very day, in the very hour, when her labour began. Or was it that she wanted it to be perpetual?"

He crushed the scarf in his hands, so that the dusty odour flew like jets of steam between his fingers. Patrick Mundy said, in a sudden still fury of excitement:

"Damaris! How near I have been to her secrets, how often I have laid my hands on them, and not known. And all that kept them from me was a slip of tawdry inlay, and a sliding partition of wood no thicker than my little finger. Look! You see the trick of it." He turned the fallen desk-top upward on his arm, and showed a slip of wood which lifted up and down in a groove. "You pull out the first drawer, and with your fingers press up this partition, and the spring shoots the second drawer forward. You see it is shallower than the other. Once released, a finger-tip would draw it out."

Julian picked up the drawer, and it was light and rough upon his hand, unpolished and badly fitted, part of a flimsy plaything.

"A bit of matchwood to hold so much! I've seen the like a dozen times. They were the commonplace of pretty,

silly toys like these, nothing to keep them secret but that no one looked for them. Think of it! No one has touched this scarf since she rolled it up into this little coffin, with my blood still upon it, and these leaves of her journal within. Unroll them. Yes, it is her hand, there is no mistake. Now we have the end of it all."

Julian smoothed the crumpled sheets, and they looked at them together, sitting shoulder against shoulder upon the edge of the bed. There were six leaves, all covered with the round hand they knew; and here the ink, preserved from both air and light, was less faded than in the diary. They were not in order, so that there was some difficulty over arranging them, and the contexts were elusive to their overstrung minds, and had to be sought. But with the diary open before them they fitted the six into place. Julian's hand upon the left side, Patrick's upon the right, they turned the pages one by one, slowly, as if they read in an unknown tongue; and living flesh to substance of illusion, they drew closer for the touch which was armour against that rapture of love lost and thrown away.

"I have tormented myself a thousand times about this marriage, more particularly at night when there was no one near me, and the thoughts would come again and again how I was surrendering even the bed of my mind, where I may rest in loneliness. From to-morrow there will be no loneliness, either by night or day. I am to remember that, and it has made me pause many a time, but not now, not to-night nor ever again, I am assured now that I can do what I must. From this night he will be in all my solitudes, so that I cannot weep when I would, nor be at all sad, nor silent, for fear he should discover the cause of it. So be it; from this time forth I am another

woman. What I will do I can do. One person at least shall be happy in this most unhappy house.

"Well, God knows I have been patient. I waited a year, and though I knew myself forgotten, it was hateful to me to think of belonging to anyone but my love. And yet in a while it came on me that we were two wretched people where only one need be, and that I owed Harry a body and a life at least for his unceasing goodness to me. Also I had of my father a little book for taking with me to Eucharist, and it taught me to say at the altar: My Beloved is mine, and I am His. It was like a spell. The more that I repeated it, the more did I possess my soul in peace; for by the measure in which I loved my Lord, so I loved my love also, as if I had transcended the world. And after a while it came to me that the business of love was not to have, but to give; and that to give a mere body was only a very little sacrifice from a having so immense as mine.

"For that reason, and for no other, I consented to marry him, and shall marry him to-morrow as I have promised, swearing to love, honour and obey him to my life's end; as I will do, God helping me, to such perfection that he shall never know he has stood less than first in my heart. As for the end of it, that is not with me. Harry shall not be robbed, nor will God let me lack my love, else how could heaven be heaven?

"August 24.

"Well, it is all safely over at last——"

Here ended the first leaf, and turning to the second, past the commonplaces and tragedies of her Welsh honeymoon, they read:

†December 11.

"Poor little book, I only open you now to let blood when I am beyond endurance. I must write it, there is no one to whom I may say it.

"He has come home. He is here below me, in this very house, sitting with Harry in the hall. I can hear his voice, for the door of the room is open, it is like listening to my own ghost speaking from the past. How can I go down and face him? Already they have all wondered at me, I have been so gay and frivolous and unlike my stupid self. Oh, I have done what I could all this time, and it has not been easy. Why must he come back to haunt me? Why must Harry bring him here to torment me when I thought my peace most complete?

"They came home together shortly before dinner. I heard the hall door close, and came down to meet my husband; and from the landing I looked down and saw him standing at the foot of the stairs. It was as if he had never been away from us, as if I were not Harry's wife, nor he a stranger these four years. If he had not been always in my thoughts I should not have known him, for it was dark, and he is changed. But I am sure now that he could not come within the same walls with me, and I not know it, could not pass by me in a coach, but I should feel he had been near. My heart betrayed me—thank God Harry was not there to hear—and I cried out his name, but he saw nothing strange in it, and I shall not be so weak again.

"Well, we have all rejoiced over him, and I too much, so that now I am shivering here at this neglected book in dread and desire of his eyes upon me. This is too much trial of my strength. I have not merited such agony. Presently the first paroxysm will be over, and I shall dare to show myself. I cannot have a headache for ever; and

besides, I hate to turn my back upon what is difficult or painful, even with his eyes to point the sword. I have been in such peace, and now it is all gone.

"And yet, my love, my love, if you knew my mind, I think you would love me at last, for pity of my pain or envy of my joy, I know not which is more extreme; nor whether I most covet or dread the touch of your dear hand."

The third leaf read:

"Patrick is still safe, and all my fears empty.

"January 30.

"It is dark and cold in this room, and the bed is strange, I do not know how Harry can sleep, but he is exhausted with grief. I have not shed a tear. It is too late now to reproach ourselves. If we wept all night long we could not raise him.

"It happened as I have foreseen it every nightmare moment that he has been out of my sight. On the way home Marquis baulked at the drop down into Camber Brook, and he used his heels and drove him, but it was nothing, a man could not be killed for that. It is all very dark to me, I think I am a little mad. But I know he broke him against a tree, and all the twigs cracked like bones, or all his bones like twigs, and they rolled down the slope into the brook, and his blood ran over the edges of the ice, and little threads of it crept out into the water. As long as I live I shall be seeing it.

"Yet he did not suffer very greatly, for he smiled at me when he lifted his head in my arm, and all the way home, in the farm-cart Harry brought, I believe I had more pain than he. If I had not loved him I would have let them send me away, as they wished, but how could

I take my arms from about him when my heart was broken with his body? He lived until twilight, lying on our bed; and all those hours I had him in my arms, his dear head close to my breast; and I think now, and torment myself by fearing to think, that he had some comfort in my nearness, more than I had dared hope to give him, for he clung very fast to my hand until he died.

"I waited until they had all of them gone away, and then I kissed his mouth, and it was still warm to mine, but it did not kiss me again, it was only a stone God let me have when I was hungry for bread. Now I kiss my hand which he held, and it is a sort of sacrament, for his blood and sweat have been upon it, and it will be holy and awful to me, all my life, though the stains are gone. The scarf which I bound around his head is rolled against my bosom now; his blood is drying fast upon it. He will soon be forgotten.

"But oh, my love, my darling, it is not good-bye I am saying to you, it is only adieu. If I have not asked anything of you in this world, what is there you can deny me in the world to come? All the more because, even there, I shall not ask for one kiss of your mouth but God will be in it."

The final pages followed each other without a break, resuming:

"the revelation for which I have waited without hope or reason for hope. I do not know how, if he had scoured the world, he could have brought me anything more full to me of both joy and pain. It is the proof I have wasted my life here, and yet it is such abounding comfort for the life to come that I am impatient now to die and be free.

"If there were no Harry! But I am his, and I do not

grudge him a moment of my company, for he has been to me the kindest creature I have ever known, and I do cherish him, and shall do while I live. How that refrain comes in, while I live, while I live, as though I were one of those unhappy creatures who run upon death as an end of misery, while in truth I have been blessed beyond deserving. For many better men and women than I am have not been so happy as to believe in God and His mercy without questioning, which I have always done, nor to feel any assurance they should live again, which I have never doubted. My lot, too, has been cast where there was always food and firing and soft lying to be had, even though the mind was not always easy with the body. And I have been so happy as to love one man with all my heart and soul, which is a very great happiness.

"And he has loved me. I know it now by his own confession. Shall I question of God why, if he loved me, he went away in silence and coldness, and sent me no kind word of remembrance for four years, but left me to listen to Harry unceasingly saying: You see he does not care; You see he will not come back; He has forgotten you? If it was a lack in me, if it was a lack in him, it is over, and I cannot better it now with all my questioning. Still I have what cannot be taken away from me. He loved me. It does not matter, after all, what is past. I would rather look forward to a meeting in which there will be no shadow of misunderstanding, and no dread of another parting.

"I have read his verses over and over, and shed tears for them, but indeed I am the happiest of women."

The final entry followed without any date, but in an ink of a deeper and more enduring blue, only a blank line separating it from the former passage.

"I have done a very foolish thing, and yet I am glad of it; if doctors will not or cannot answer questions I am justified in going to those who can and will. I prefer to know what I have to face.

"All the while that I have carried my baby I have been in such secret languors and faintings, so dull and weary against my will, that I was sure from the first there was more ailed me than simply the child; but I have not had any pains nor sickness more than is common in my condition, which made it seem there could not be much amiss. The doctor, when he saw me and I questioned him, either would not or could not tell me anything, and I believe and pray he has told Harry nothing, either. However, I was not reassured so easily, and I have been to an old midwife who has something of a reputation for wisdom in herbs and such, and would have been feared as a witch in any less enlightened time. I did not find her at all terrible, and at least she was honest with me.

"So now I know my fate. It seems I have a complaint of the liver which can lie dormant in a woman all her life if she is unmarried, but which is bad for child-bearing. It is strange to think that my body in which I have lived so quietly, which has seemed always so strong, and needed so little care, should breed its own destruction now. Stranger still that this little thing which has not yet sight, nor movement, nor life of its own should be able to kill me. For I asked her if the disease was dangerous to my baby, and she replied no, but very dangerous to me, and that the child should not even be weakly because of it, but that my chance of life was at best but one in ten.

"I am not so foolish as to think on that account that I am certain to die, and yet for fear of it happening so I must have my thoughts in order. I am only a little

afraid, of the hours of waiting, not of the moment itself, nor of what will follow it. And even now I do not know whether I more dearly long to go to my love or to remain here with my poor little child. How blessed I am, who have two such destinies awaiting me, and yet I thank God the choice is not mine to make, for I am torn in two, to lose either of them is unbearable pain.

"I am waiting now for the pangs to begin, and I think my time will not be long. I am very weak, and no one knows how weary. But if I die the child will be Harry's consolation, and Harry the child's security; and I think sometimes that Patrick must be very lonely; for he was a solitary on earth even from those who were his friends, and he died so young, and so suddenly, before he had time to change. They will find another nurse for my baby, but no one, no one can go to Patrick with the knowledge and power and love that I have in me now, and give him happiness and peace such as I can give. So it may be best for us all if I die. Perhaps it is only the drain of this endless lassitude which makes me now so secure of my passing. But I feel him very near.

"Harry must never know I had another love, or a single thought of disloyalty to him. Even if I die, his memory of me shall not be embittered. I am going to cut out all the leaves of this book in which I have betrayed my heart, and burn them, for they have served their purpose, which was to give me ease whenever my powers of deception faltered. The book I dare not destroy, for Harry has seen it often, and will expect to find it among my papers, if anything happens to me. The scarf, too, I must burn with them, if time will serve, but——

"It is too late—the pains have begun——"

The last line was in a hand which seemed scarcely hers,

so desperately was it shaken with the onset of her pangs. Julian let his hand slip from the open book, and closing his eyes, raised her ghost before him again, that strong and resplendent spirit whose face filled for the moment all his thoughts. He groped for his companion's arm through an almost palpable mist of the presence of Damaris.

"Do you see now why she escaped you?" he asked in a low voice. "How could you hope to catch the passage of a soul like hers, so rapt from the world already, and with such a love to speed her? It must have been like the flight of a wind."

Patrick Mundy turned his head, and his face was like a closed window, no life in even the cavernous eyes, as he answered:

"It is true, and truer than you know. I was out of the body, but I was still fastened in the world, when Damaris went back to God."

He rose, and crossed slowly to the window, and there leaning upon his arms in the soft, still air, beheld the world all washed clean of its violences and unresting energies in the spell of the rain. The sun was nothing but a faint yellow stain behind the grey veil to westward, and the sky, for all its clouds, opened limpid as water above his head, as if the house and its inhabitants were shut in a bowl of glass, where neither sound nor movement could come at them, and from which they could not break free.

"What have you done," he said, raising his dark face to the sky with a desolate gesture, "what have you done with all your goodness but redouble my longing? If there must be a hundred worlds between us, do you think it is any joy to me to know that she in her heaven is no happier than I in my purgatory? Knowledge you

said we must have, and we have it, knowledge of evil, knowledge of sorrow, knowledge of damnation. What grief had I before, compared with this grief? Why did you not leave me in my illusion? It was better to have no Damaris than a Damaris as distant as the sun and as un comforted as Lucifer. I shall never see her again. I shall never reach her country. How can I hope for it? Damaris—Damaris——” he moaned, and sank into his arms upon the floor against the low window-sill, and was dissolved into an invisible, sobbing torment of air before Julian’s eyes.

Julian stood still in the middle of the room, while from wall to wall the grey spaces threshed round him. He fixed his eyes upon the discoloured blot which was the sun in heaven, and said steadily:

“Did you ever think how irresistible the prayers of Damaris might be? Could you deny her anything if she were on her knees before *your* throne?”

XXVI

THE TONDO OF ST. LUKE

ON Sunday night they went to New St. Julian’s together, and sat under the memorial window of Dr. Ferne, and heard the choir sing Abelard’s hymn.

*Truly Jerusalem name we that shore,
Vision of peace that brings joy evermore;
Wish and fulfilment can severed be ne’er,
Nor the thing prayed for come short of the prayer.*

That was probably, in spite of all the decorations with which other writers had hung the theme, the most com-

pletely satisfying definition of heaven in any language. It left nothing human in the cold; it even embraced, like the rhapsodies of Isaiah, every littlest thing which had life. If it were true, and it must be true, only free-will could shape it, heaven was what a man at his apotheosis could make of his own world. So comfortable a theory from a creature so uncomforted rang with the conviction of desire, for desire has an intense power of compulsion over abstract things, and desire of noble ends is the strongest and greatest prayer under the sun.

So thought Julian, feeling the hand of Patrick Mundy heavy upon his sleeve. But could even the love of Damaris undo what Patrick himself had done? Turn time back, set the universe spinning the contrary way! If you could loose Patrick Mundy from exile there was no limit, the sea could be lifted over the land, the air could be turned to water, Lucifer, Son of the Morning, could be raised again from his humiliation, and God deposed from His sapphire throne. Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? No, there was no answer there. Damaris was to be cheated, then. Dead-lock in heaven; she indomitably pleading against a law which could not be stayed; God immortally suffering her voice, which could not be disregarded. And here in New St. Julian's, under the memorial of the great divine, the only solution of the riddle in the bodyless person of Patrick Mundy; who alone could deliver himself, who alone could deliver them.

*Now in the meantime, with hearts raised on high,
We for that country must yearn and must sigh,
Seeking Jerusalem, dear native land,
Through our long exile on Babylon's strand.*

So sang the choir, with more accuracy than they knew.

Afterwards they went round into the vestry. The choir had gone, the organist was still moving about vaguely in the loft overhead, and Euan Pryce in his rusty mended cassock was counting the collection under the eyes of two churchwardens, when he looked up and saw Julian enter, and smiled at the recognised walk, though he had to pucker his eyes to see the face. Julian had wished to draw him aside, but he pushed the money from him and came; and Julian laid between them, upon the top of the safe, the flat box in which were packed the fragments of St. Luke's *tondo*.

"I think these are what you've been looking for," he said, and cut the string, and removed the lid and its attendant layers of soft paper to expose the glass itself, its five fragments laid carefully together like a finished jigsaw, only here and there a small, indented chip still missing from the edge. "It isn't perfect, but then it never can be again, for bits of it must be fine dust after all these years. Still, I suppose this will make it possible to restore the window."

Euan Pryce, whose eyes had been flashing from Julian to the box and back again to Julian, with dawning comprehension brightening them slowly as he stood, put out a wondering hand and picked up the largest slip of glass. "You don't mean it? Not the last relics of my St. Luke?" He held it up to the waning light, and the green hood, the long, pathetic, enchanting Flemish face came into view faintly through the grime of a century. He narrowed his eyes eagerly, and stared his fill. "It is the St. Luke Virgin. Who would have believed she could still be in only five pieces? The Adam Virgin! Every church in England will envy us."

"I didn't clean it," said Julian, "I didn't know how,

and I was afraid of damaging it. Besides, I knew you'd do the job better than I should."

"Clean it? I should think not! I let the experts do that. I don't trust even myself with Adam glass. Doctor Sears, you must know I'm infinitely indebted to you. Where did you find it?"

"In the crypt."

"Which is locked." He raised his head and looked at Julian with a long, contemplative stare. "Or did you discover it the afternoon you borrowed the keys?"

"No," said Julian deliberately. "I did not use that key."

"Then how did you get in?"

"I have not been in the crypt," said Julian steadily; and they looked at each other in silence for a long while.

"You don't want me to ask any questions," said Euan Pryce at last, and very gently, "and I don't want to ask any. But is there anything I can offer in repayment to the restorer of this treasure?"

Julian felt the unseen fingers tremble on his wrist. He said slowly: "Yes, you can—if you will—pray for him."

"Is there nothing more I can do?"

"There is nothing more anyone can do," he said in sudden despairing passion; and the two of them returned into the coppery shining evening, leaving Euan Pryce standing in the deserted vestry with the head of the Virgin in his hands.

There was nothing more. They did not speak of it until they were together in the silence of the night, that absolute and enlarging stillness of quiet places in darkness, into which mere words drop without a ripple. Then they talked all night, lying in the hot quiet of the canopied bed, in an obscurity in which each was as shadowy as the other,

so that they might have been brothers who had shared a room all their lives. But their talk was not brothers' talk, or not such as brothers use in normal life. It had reached the ground-level of a despair as acquiescent and motionless as the night itself. Friendship had failed them; pity had failed them; they talked of failures as men cannot talk of hope, in the cold light of absolute reason.

"What is the use of deceiving ourselves?" said Patrick Mundy. "We should never have permitted this friendship. It cannot set me free. It can only harm you. You see it has done so already."

Julian, sprawled on top of the rumpled covers with his chin in his hands, replied: "That's for me to decide. I thought you valued me."

"So I do. But you see we have reached a blank wall. No man can deliver his brother."

"No," said Julian, "but he can die with him."

There was a stirring in the darkness, and the poet's arm circled his shoulders; he felt, though he could not see, the dark eyes close and wild with wonder.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. If a lifetime isn't enough, I'll give you my after-life. If you could break the chain for her, so can I for you, and I will. Better two of us in exile together, than one alone." He reached up and took the clinging arm in his two hands, so that they were face to face and straining after each other in the gloom, in a great hunger to see each how the other looked upon himself in this moment of absolute communion. "We're either free together, or damned together; for as God sees me, I won't go without you."

XXVII

PROVIDENCE COTTAGE MOURNS ITS DEAD

SOME half-hour before Margaret, even if there had been no doubt of her coming could have been expected to arrive, young Jo Grace came hammering madly at the front door of Providence Cottage and shouting for Doctor Sears in a shrill whimper, like a scared animal. Julian ran and brought him in in the hollow of his arm and sat him down in the cushions at the window to recover his breath and his coherence.

"Now then, what's the matter? It can't be as bad as all that, surely."

"It's me grandad," gasped Jo, his usually self-possessed little freckled face shaking and chalky with fright. "He's bad again, and please, you're to go to him quick——"

"Did your mother send you?"

"Yes, she's gone. I was sitting by him, and he was talking, and he fell down——" His small jaw wobbled, and he began to cry, almost without tears, but in gulps which shook him like the wind at a rickety gate. "I think he's dead—he breathed all in the top of his head—it was awful." His grubby knuckles had not improved the appearance of his face, and were in any case quite inadequate to stanch his terror. He plunged into Julian's shoulder and was not repulsed.

"There, you little idiot!" said Julian, with an easy confidence he was far from feeling. "What's the worry? He's had these turns before, only you haven't seen them. There's nothing to upset yourself over. He'll be better again in a day or two, you see if he isn't. It's nothing out of the way. He's not dead, nor going to die, so don't you think it."

Jo consented to be comforted rather because he had wept himself out than for any confidence he felt in Julian's judgment, and presently allowed himself to be despatched homeward with only a dirty face and a slight uneasiness of the stomach to show for his unpleasant experience.

Julian closed the door upon him and reached for his own hat almost in the same gesture. He did not think of Patrick and think of Margaret he dared not. If she came in his absence it would mean the cementing of their separation, for he would have lost for ever his chance of winning her back to him. But it might be that he was both hoping and fearing without reason, that she would not come, that she had never intended to come. That was cold comfort; yet he had, and was grateful that he had, no choice in the matter; it simplified his problem, if it could not save him.

He was at the door when he thought of Patrick; he could never enter or leave the house now without remembering and looking for him. He looked up at the stairs, half in the oaken obscurity in which they dwelt even at midday, half in light from the window; and the tall and spare body was there, a few steps up the second turn of the flight, with thin hand dropped under its ruffles upon the banister, and sombre eyes burning upon him silently out of their hollow mask. He was accustomed now to many things which had seemed strange, and could stride over differences of clothing and appearance which had thrown the whole union out of focus a few short days previously; but the dark dew which discoloured the whole space of one side of the forehead made his heart turn in him. He went back to the foot of the stairs, and the light had changed, or the angle at which he looked up, for the illusion of blood was gone.

"And if Margaret comes?" asked Patrick, descending

slowly towards him, the line of reflected light upon the banisters shining through his hand as it passed.

Julian shrugged his shoulders. "It can't be helped. It was only a forlorn hope at best. She won't come."

"I shall wait for you," said Patrick.

Julian departed in haste, as was his way once a decision had been made; and here there was no decision for him to make, for whether she came or did not come, whether she waited for him or went away again disconsolate and strengthened in her resolution, he could do nothing but go to his duty.

Silence descended upon the hall, upon the stairs, upon the bedroom which was just beginning to suck the yellow afternoon light through the leaded panes in diagonal shafts thin as pencils. One wall was hung with a curtain of old yellow lace which shimmered as the open window swung; and there sound appeared to linger in a pattern of colours, while over the rest of the room silence settled like fine dust, clogging the memory of the present into a spectral revisiting of the past. Providence Cottage had outlived time; within its walls the clocks ticked loud as ever, from the mellow thrum of the grandfather clock in the hall below to the grasshopper singing of the little globe on Julian's tallboy, between its ugly heraldic supporters of vegetable ivory; they marked and measured nothing. The heart of the house, the only meter which ever had measured the years of its inhabitants, had ceased to beat; and the dead are outside time. Patrick crossed the room in a rebellion as instinctive as if he had had life in his being to goad him, and opened the window wide, so that light and air and the sounds of distant traffic flowed in upon a wave of cheerful discord, and beat against the moveless serenity within, and fell back broken into their own orbit. Providence Cottage kept its unrelenting

sleep, and dreams stirred in it, dreams all the more vivid because there were no longer any centuries to keep them at bay, any moments to let him breathe alien air between their instant processions through his mind. They were not a hundred years ago, they were now, and if now, then for ever.

In Julian's bedroom nothing moved, nothing but a patch of light continually expanding and contracting upon the wall opposite the mirror. The swing of the glass was imperceptible; the swing of the reflection was like marked music, crossing and recrossing twelve feet of panelling with the unearthly regularity of a pendulum. He sat down in the open space of the window and watched it come and go until the whole room should have been swinging before his eyes, but nothing moved. Whatever cord had bound Providence Cottage to the scheme of natural laws, it had been severed at his death. He could not move it to any emotion now, nor ripple the surface of its stony tranquillity.

He looked out from the window and saw the light of mid-afternoon, rich and sweet as the juice of a ripe pomegranate, clinging to every leaf of the orchard like a syrup distilled from within. The green was not yet any colour but green, and yet its quality had changed, and become weighted with an overglow as pale and cloying as honey; and out of the branches came up to him a drowsy droning like bees half-asleep. Head of leaf beyond head of leaf, an assembly of elders, the orchard moved away from beneath the window towards the hidden wall which bounded the lane, and flung his eyes before he knew it upon the apex of Old St. Julian's, the empty frame of St. Luke standing against the coppery distances which were neither earth nor sky. He heard, as if from another world, a singing of children which went slowly along the

lane beyond the orchard wall, a shrill singing which was more than half-inclined to be only laughter, and perhaps shouting in the laughter, an instinctive sound out of a joy as innocent and animal and desirable as the leaning of flesh to the sun. He, who had no flesh, received the sound as an acid poured upon his mind. There was power in him still to remember and covet it, but none to perceive how it was possible to attain it.

He thought: "Those are the creatures who will soon be weeping," and he wondered and was glad that as yet they felt no tremor of foreboding. It was strange to think that this pagan pleasure could inhabit the same flesh destined to so many sorrows, and yet receive no warning in its growing bones of the wrath to come. He busied his sad mind with making a little song in their innocent honour, but there was no pleasure in it.

*The self-same water maketh
The deep pools in the hollows,
As on the high slope breaketh
In silver, mirth, and shaketh
Over the singing shallows.*

*For I have read thee rightly,
Oh, laughing stream, believe it.
I have not judged thee lightly;
Go flash thy gold waves brightly,
And clasp thy pleasure tightly
Or e'er the deeps receive it.*

But what was there in the sorrows of life, by comparison with his own sorrows? And how many had tasted from the beginning of the world, how many would taste to the end of it, the bitter of this dark Lethe which ran

between heaven and earth and hell, or feel round their souls the touch of this outer darkness which he felt night and day for ever?

He withdrew his sight from the world by the turn of his will, as if he closed his eyes; and his mind, running before, threw like a writing on the wall old scraps of his reading, one by one; and after a while only the great sweetness of *Pearl* remained.

*Of Jerusalem is now my speech:
If thou wouldst know what kind is He,
My Lamb, my Lord, my dearest Jewel——*

*In Jerusalem was my Truelove slain
And rent on rood by boist'rous churls;
Full ready all our bales to bear,
He took on Him our cares so cold.
With buffets was His face all flay'd
That was so fair to look upon——*

*As meek as lamb, that made no plaint,
For us He died in Jerusalem.*

He thought of Damaris. It seemed to him no longer possible that she should be less than most happy, whatever she lacked, whatever she desired, with such an ecstasy as that for ever folding her in its translating splendour. He saw heaven as a state of mind, as a peak of rapture fixed for ever, so that beginnings and endings, losses and lesser sorrows, were lost in the cloud of this one glory. He saw it as what the world would call madness, a possessing of the mind to the utter exclusion, or at least the dimming, of all remembered emotions. And though he knew that this clarity of vision, whether false

or true, would not long remain with him, he thanked God for the moment of its coming and the length of its lingering; and the spontaneous rush of praise seemed to loosen a funeral garment from about his soul, so that he lifted himself up madly to perceive a peak still higher, a state of rapture in which sorrow could exist, did exist at its loftiest and deepest, but without impairing that unimaginable transport of joy.

The fire of his imaginings sank, but a warmth remained after it. He fell to fashioning another song, and this time the labour was less facile, but the lines suffered themselves to be disentangled hardly from the jungle of thoughts which came in upon the emptiness, until he had his sonnet clear in his mind, and repeated it soundlessly into the silence:

*I would extol Thee to the highest heights,
Deep as the depths, telling Thy praise, would go;
I would set words to every river's flow,
And fill with starry psalmody the nights;
I would exalt Thee where the eagle lights,
And fly with Thee into the vales below,
Hymn Thee the spring of joy, the charm of woe,
Armour of kings, and bread of anchorites.*

*Had I the torrent's song, the whirlwind's speed,
How would I clasp Thee to my breast and soar
Till through the thunder-clouds Thy Name should roll,
And all the oceans bring Thee praise indeed:
Whom now in impotence I must adore
Stilly, within this secret room, my soul.*

He heard, while the sweetness of it was still in his mouth, the sound of the hall door opening, not impetuously, as

Julian would have opened it, not stealthily as a stranger, receiving no answer to a knock, might have opened it, but steadily and yet with reluctance. The latch, which was heavy, hung poised a moment before it fell, as if the newcomer had let his thumb lie upon it long before releasing it. Patrick stood listening for a moment, and the house was alive and alert again round him; then he went softly out to the head of the stairs, and looking down into the hall, beheld Margaret.

She was standing in the centre of the hall, between the double curve of the book-lined walls as the space narrowed to the fireplace. Her hands were linked before her, with her light coat over them in a fall of dull brown wool; and she looked round her in the aware way of a person who feels emptiness in a house newly entered. Presently she called: "Julian!" not very loudly, as if she thought he might be near to her, and had not perceived her coming in. There was no answer. Patrick stood watching her eagerly, and hoping that Julian would come. He did not know how long he had been alone in the house, but it seemed to him already an age.

Margaret went back and closed the door gently. No sound in the room, no sound in all the house. She crossed to the dining-room, and for a few moments was out of his sight upon the threshold; to the lounge, and vanished a second time, and for a longer while, but again came back silently. Then she hesitated and glanced upward from the foot of the stairs, and her eyes pierced his bodyless substance and swept onward without a qualm. For a moment they had looked full at each other, but no recognition troubled the strange serenity of her face as she put her hand upon the polished rail and began to mount the stairs towards him.

He did not move. She reached the midway landing,

and the light flooded her from head to foot, washed the small deep shadows of character from her face, and left it for a moment alabaster white round the steady brown eyes, slipped down over her body like a yellow gown, and made her bare arms luminous. She stopped to look out from the window, and round her head the short hair stood hazy with light. Then she turned and resumed her climb.

As she drew nearer to where he stood a longing stirred in Patrick to speak to her. He remembered for his own sake a day in the orchard when she had shed one characteristic and wilful tear for his sorrows, of which she had known only the rim. And for Julian he remembered all other excellencies which ever he had seen in her, and all the insignia of Julian's need of her love. A dread came upon him that she had returned only to make her second departure irrevocable. Then, as her left hand, gliding upon the black oak, reached his sight, he saw that she was no longer wearing the flower of pearls.

She passed so close that the edge of her short sleeve brushed his arm, and he felt the touch through all his being, and wondered that she failed to be moved by it. In the open doorway of Julian's bedroom she halted again for a moment, looking round steadily; and he was at her shoulder as she went in.

She moved about softly, touching here and there a book from among his favourites, a leaf of the carving of his bed, a pane of the leaded windows. She looked curiously at the broken desk, but did not touch it; and often, as she stirred restlessly about the room, she stopped and listened intently, and with a tightening of her straight lips, as if she thought to catch Julian's step on the gravel below.

But Julian did not come. She waited perhaps a quarter of an hour, while the unseen eyes continually watched

and hesitated upon her. Then she sighed, and drew from her handbag, and held in her cupped palm for a long moment, Julian's ring. The light lay softly upon it as she set it down carefully upon the bedside table, and turning her back upon it without another glance, went steadily from the room.

At the head of the stairs he rushed to her elbow, and she felt the gasp of the wind, and sprang round with a sudden moan of astonishment and dread. Until then she had forgotten to be afraid, and the return of fear upon her was like a new pain in Patrick's heart; but not for all the pain and all the fear in even his exiled world dared he let her go from him now. He did what he had longed to do; he cried her name, softly and desperately:

"Margaret!"

She put up her hands between them, and through the spread fingers he saw her eyes distended with terror, enormous and black in their staring lashes. She made a small, inarticulate sound, deep in her throat, and clutched at it as if she were trying to force out words, an exorcism or a prayer, or a cry for help; but though her lips moved, they moved without a second sound. He saw, as if in an abstract dream, the wild drumming of a pulse under her chin, in the softly taut throat.

"Margaret—don't fear me—— How can I bear it? Margaret——"

The coat slipped from her arm, the bag from her hand. She swayed, and he saw her eyes dim slowly, as if their life were being extinguished against her will. She struggled with her stiff mouth, and uttered a dry cry which scarcely reached even his agony. She seemed to hear the words, sound and sense alike, and yet to be without understanding. In his despair he put out his pleading hands and touched her raised forearms.

Then she screamed, thin and wild between staring teeth, and leaped back from him, and her foot slipped upon the hollowed stair, and she was lost. There was a moment when she hung in air like a bended bow, with both arms spread and writhing in the width of the staircase, while he sprang to hold her, and felt her dissolve through his arms like water. She screamed again, and it was as if another scream mingled with her own. Then she had fallen, had slipped with impossible speed and silence down to the landing, where her whole body seemed to crush together in one dull and hollow thud, and lie like a pool of spilled water in its huddle of fallen clothes.

XXVIII

PROVIDENCE COTTAGE COMFORTS ITS LIVING

JULIAN came down the stairs of No. 5, Folly Crescent, at Mrs. Grace's heels, past the open door of the first-floor living-room, which smelled of stale scent, past the landing window with its outlook upon heaps of firewood and mouldering hen-coops, and down to the ground floor where at the foot of the stairs the first-floor tenant was taking leave of a man.

She said: "Ooh, sorry, I'm sure!" with nervous politeness, and stepped from the lowest stair to let them go by. Her own leave-taking was by no means over, but she spared the time to watch them out of the corners of her lustrous, uneasy eyes as they walked down No. 5's quarried battle-ground to the front door. She looked at Mrs. Grace's majestic walk, and made a grimace with her purple mouth. The ground-floor tenant, who disapproved of everyone, withdrew her bony self into her kitchen and closed the door resoundingly.

Julian was no longer startled to perceive in Mrs. Grace a quality which walked through these people with its head in the clouds, not so much ignoring them as failing to see them at all. She stood in the doorway, and her eyes which were so oddly like her great-grandmother's eyes looked up at the sky, and her full mouth sighed.

"That was a bad half-hour," she said. "I don't know about you, doctor, but I was thinking he wouldn't live to see such another—at least, I was until you came."

"Jo thought the same," said Julian. "He had a bad fright, and I wouldn't leave him too long alone if I were you. Of course, I told him there was no need to worry, there was no danger." He smiled and drew a long breath of the clean, grey air which filled the shadowy side of Folly Crescent. "And it seems there isn't."

"But there was," said Mrs. Grace. "You don't have to tell me."

"For a quarter of an hour it was touch and go," he admitted soberly. "But I think he'll do very nicely now. Of course, it will put him back practically where we started from, but not all the way, I'm hoping. I'll look in again after surgery to-night, just to make sure he's going on according to programme. If necessary I'll give him another injection then, but I don't think it will be necessary."

He paused on the lowest stone step and looked at her where she stood between the two decayed plaster panels of bacchanalia and hunt, in which dismembered arms and legs and grotesque half-faces still flourished their dilapidated bays, and danced their indecorous dances, and performed fanfares upon their pipes and horns. Frail though she was, she remained immeasurably more enduring than they. He said: "You look tired. I should come away now, if I were you, and leave him to Mrs.

Philbin. You need a rest; and I imagine Jo will be glad when you come home, too."

"I'll go home directly," she said slowly. "Thank you, Dr. Sears." She smiled at him once, her kind but not happy smile, and turned, and went back into the house.

Julian walked home to Eden Close. The mouldering splendour of Folly Crescent fell behind him, the generous sweep of path on one hand, the road and the derelict mounting-blocks on the other. He walked through his own streets, little back-alleys of black and white, gullets arched over by Elizabethan attics, unexpected flights of steps diving beneath dangling galleries, the streets and lanes he knew and loved, and in which he had made his work. People spoke to him as he passed. Here and there the sun touched him for a moment, like a hesitant blessing. The thought of the room he had left behind went slowly from him, of the crowded ornaments and tall windows, of the old man breathing in long groans in the bed, and the photograph of Henriette still stubborn and defiant in its plush frame, and the forest of chimney-pots which made it plain that this household, like all the rest, counted as one chimney-pot, no more and no less, to the rest of Charleworth glancing from its windows. Instead, he thought of things he was going to do to this city; of river-side property which must and should be condemned; of a children's clinic which should be established in or near Testament Road, though its operations would get as yet no thanks, and be repeatedly undone and greatly resented; of a not too remote friend on the Advisory Council who should be bullied into recommending at least three tubercular girls from the same notorious thoroughfare for the sanatorium at Godsoe Hills. Testament Road itself almost made him despair; for there was little anyone could do for a sink like that, short of pulling down

every stick and stone, and disinfecting the very earth underneath before beginning to rebuild. It was an awful reflection on someone that maybe between three and five per cent of town property was unfit for human habitation; or perhaps he was putting it too high, for he had no use for statistics, he knew only that every tourist-haunted, prosperous and pleasant Charleworth had its Testament Road. He remembered a dictum of his partner's that misery breeds in vice, and in his own mind violently inverted it to read: vice breeds in misery. He remembered, too, a clash between Margaret and a distributor of religious pamphlets, over this same melodramatic street. The man had given her a highly-coloured booklet, and she had thanked him gravely, so that he had felt encouraged to reveal that his ambition was to present every person in Testament Road with a Bible. Margaret had said, looking at him with her straight, kind eyes: "You'd be better employed giving them all a non-leaking roof and a square meal." He had asked, and his astonishment perhaps partly excused the fatuity of the question: "But don't you want them to be good?" and she had smiled wonderfully, but with frank amusement, and said: "If they were happy they'd be good."

All that coil to ward off Margaret, and there she was at the end of it.

He reached Eden Close, and quickened his pace as he crossed it; but in the shadow of the porch he checked and stood struggling with his unexpected burdens of heart. Her hands, Margaret's most dear hands, curled cool round his mind; but between the palms of them, unquenchable, Patrick Mundy's eyes devoured his substance. He opened the door and went in.

Instant as music to the bow, someone screamed as the latch fell. He himself cried out, more for the pain of

the sound upon his ears than for any distress of which his reason knew. Then the room, shaken together jangling by the cry, settled back into place, and he saw Margaret falling, saw her spread like a bird in flight, with dropped head and streaming hair, until she crashed in a drift of limp arms and disordered clothes upon the landing, and shuddered once, and rolled one hand slowly over the edge of the next stair and lay still.

He cried: "Margaret, Margaret——" and sprang wildly up the stairs, and gathered her into his arms. Her head lolled on his shoulder heavy and still, the warm throat turned upward to his entreating lips; and her body had become nothing but a dead weight upon him, only a downward dragging as fluid as heavy fallen silk, and having no more life. She was breathing, and his hands, moving by instinct, found no broken bones; but his mind was beyond knowledge. He sprang upright and stared over her inert body at Patrick Mundy, motionless upon the staircase above him.

"What have you done to her?" he cried. "What have you said? Is this your friendship?—first to drive her away from me, and then to destroy her? Curse your meddling! Get away from her, get out of my sight. What right had you in her life, or in mine?"

XXIX

A DOOR CLOSSES

MARGARET opened her eyes upon stippled windows leaning their diamonds sidelong to the sun. The lilac branches outside crossed and recrossed the panes with green dapplings of shadow, and between their leaves the catches of sun exploded like the hundred aqueous burst-

ing stars in running water in an open place, when the first sunshine of summer finds and plays in it. She watched it for several minutes before this simile came into her mind. At first she found it amusingly like the flickering of a cinema screen during an old-fashioned film. Then the feeling of water came into it, and she found her mind floating upon the dimpling waves, sucked away by a current as seductive as music in the distance. She felt the lift and coolness and flow of it, swift and lulling, with a sparkle which she could almost hear; and thoughts came rushing softly over her of upland brooks whiter than crystal upon their polished pebbles of onyx and seed pearl, of little rain-rivulets in town gutters, and bubbles of sea-foam scuttling up beaches of slate washed blue as lapis lazuli. She lay still, and felt no desire to think, or speak, or move, for listening to the sun upon the window, scintillating like arpeggios from an invisible piano, and shimmering like cachinations of laughter breaking far above her head. Her senses shifted with every thread of breeze which fluttered her hair, settling nowhere long enough to record anything so dull as fact. She was not yet even sufficiently conscious to know that her head ached. There was a smell which she did not trouble to identify as eau-de-Cologne, and her forehead was pleasantly cold and tingling in a manner which she associated vaguely with the smell; but apart from this her head was quite empty of recollections. She lay in a trance of content.

Presently, for no reason that she knew, she turned her head a little, and there beside her was Julian's face. It grew slowly out of the emptiness and fastened upon her labouring perception line by line, a mild, bookish face, broad across the eyes, narrow but not meanly narrow at the jaw, with a good chin, and an odd, ascetic generosity

of mouth, such as became him in her sight. An unambitious, to most people an undistinguished, face; a face which would never wear honours with dignity, nor put on prosperity with any grace; made, rather, for carrying into backwaters where the flow of life could not penetrate, and the river of things human was become stagnant. A curious thought was this to come earliest into her mind; that she would be the wife of an obscure country doctor to the end of her days, and glad beyond all telling to be no less and no more. He was smiling, but it seemed to her that his face was strangely white. No doubt he was overworking, and who was she that she should complain, if it made him happy?

Some constriction of strangeness, the first and most lamentable effort to associate events into some sort of coherence, passed through her mind and left only discomfort behind. She said: "Hullo, Julian!" in a childish way. Her voice, like the lost laughter, seemed to come from far above her head.

"Hullo," said Julian, very softly.

"I suppose," she said carefully, "this is Providence Cottage?"

"Yes, of course it is. Why?"

"I thought it must be, because of the windows; there aren't any windows like that anywhere else I go. But, isn't it stupid?—I don't in the least recollect coming here."

"I expect it will come back presently," said Julian slowly. "I wasn't here when you came; do you remember that? You came to see me, and I'd had to go out to a case." He waited, watching her face; but no shadow crossed the serenity of her expression. She said: "That's just how it would happen!" and smiled, and groped for a moment in her comfortable dream. "What day is it, then, Julian?"

"Don't you really know?" he asked, and a warm core of hope began to glow in his heart.

"I haven't the slightest idea. Doesn't it sound silly? My head's quite clear, but there's nothing in it. I suppose it's Wednesday, isn't it?" Her brow wrinkled with effort, but still nothing stirred from its sleep in her mind. "I know I answered the telephone this morning, and it was a wrong number, someone wanted the steam laundry in a terrible hurry, and kept fuming: 'Are you collars? I want collars, get me collars at once.' I suppose the poor man wanted to lodge a complaint, and meant it to reach the right department; but I wasn't collars, so I never heard the end of it. Isn't it crazy? That's absolutely all I've got." She frowned in concentration, and relaxed into weak laughter because concentration was too much trouble and pain.

"There's no need to worry, my dear," she said, meeting his troubled eyes. "I've been like this before. I remember that, at any rate. I was walking home from school once, when I was quite a kiddy, and I fell and banged the back of my head hard on a frozen road, and I lived in a cloud for about two days; people just loomed at me, and the minute they were gone I forgot they existed. I knew everybody, and I knew my way home, and all those things, but I never did recollect any of the little incidents of the week or so before it happened. They told me I'd broken a doll, and quarrelled with the girl next door and hit her with a wooden spade—but I couldn't remember the crime at all." A reminiscent smile, hesitating to come in fullness, made her mouth fascinating. "It's odd how clear that is now. I had a huge lump right on the round part of the back of my head——" She lifted it from the cushions for a moment to feel for the place and was surprised into a grimace of pain. "Oh, it's sore! There

is a lump rising. Whatever happened to me? Did I faint? Surely not! I've never fainted in my life."

"You fell downstairs," said Julian, putting back the tangled hair from her forehead with his finger-tips. "Don't try to think too much yet, dear. I'm afraid you'll have a very troublesome head for a time, as it is."

"Fell downstairs? What, all the way down?"

"I found you on the landing. You frightened me terribly."

"Yes, I'm sorry, I must have done. I love that staircase, but I always thought it was rather dangerous. However, I'll try and learn to climb it without falling and scaring you to death. How long have I been unconscious, then?"

"Very nearly half an hour. Would you like to sit up now? I think you might. With his arm supporting her, she lifted herself into the corner of the settee, and looked round slowly with large dazed eyes upon the familiar room. "Is your head any clearer yet?" he asked, gravely watching her.

"It's dazzlingly clear, but I still don't remember anything. I wonder if Mrs. Cator asked me to bring anything for her? There's usually something when I come into Charleworth, but this time I shall have to go back without it, whatever it was. Perhaps my blind spot will fill up just now, and I shall remember."

"Not everything, please God!" prayed Julian, hugging his gratitude to him jealously, for a moment might shatter it now, and send her away from him into the aching distance from which she had come. She opened her lips, and he held his breath, feeling his heart halt until she spoke.

"Could you give me a lead, I wonder? Tell me something I ought to remember? But there, I can't have seen you for a week, I suppose, because it's always once a week;

and I think—I'm not sure, but I think I can remember as late as a week ago without any prodding. Didn't we go to see the vicar, and borrow some keys? And he showed us some stained glass by a man called Adam—a lovely little Flemish lady—or was that longer than a week ago?"

"That was three weeks ago," said Julian. "Last week you came as usual, but we didn't go out because it was raining. You were angry with me."

"Was I?" said Margaret, amused. "Why? Because it was raining?"

"Because I didn't turn up at the concert on the Monday night."

"Oh, didn't you? What concert was that?" She met his watching eyes, and her own were clear without a stain, so that he felt his last fears dissolve, and the wild thankfulness had its way. He lifted her hand and shut his cheek into the palm of it; the fingers caressed him instinctively, with a touch which soothed his taut mind into a wonderful ease. He found himself very tired.

"I'm glad I've forgotten," said Margaret pensively. "I don't want to be reminded of all the stupid little things we've said and done, so don't prompt me any more. What do I care if you didn't come to the concert with me? And what do you care if I was angry about it? We're not often like that, thank heaven."

"No, we're not often like that," he said humbly.

"Never mind what we did last week, then; what were we going to do to-day?"

"I don't think we made any plans."

The quality of his voice in the answer, though it was steady enough and clear enough, made her turn her head to look at him again, with a puzzled but peaceful smile. She found his eyes lifted fixedly out of the hollow of her hand, which he still held to his cheek like a talisman.

Tired but victorious eyes were Julian's now, and without exultation in victory, but full of that sapping languor of peace which treads upon the heels of warfare.

"I know," she said impulsively. "I must have frightened you more than I hurt myself. But you see I'm quite all right, there's nothing to show for it but a bump on my head." She smiled, and in the middle of the smile was still, staring at her own hand. "Julian," she cried in dismay, "oh, Julian, I've lost my ring."

Julian snatched her hand down from his cheek, and there was the neat circlet of white dazzling against her honey-coloured skin. He said: "You must have dropped it in the hall somewhere. It can't be far away."

"It never slipped off before," said Margaret in distress.

"You never fell downstairs before, my dear. No, don't get up, yet, dear; I want you to rest. I'll go and find it, don't worry."

He was careful, as he went into the hall, to close the door between them; but neither on the stairs nor below in the glitter of the irises, nor above at the midway window where Damaris had stood at her love's returning, did he catch any glimpse of the form he had expected to see. He went forward slowly to the spot where the room widened, so that he had the whole of it in his sight; but nowhere was there a ringed hand stirring against the dark panels, nor the hollow deep-set mask of mournful eyes anywhere watching him from the cool, void air.

He whispered: "Patrick! Hist, Patrick, where are you?" but had no answer; and he dared not call aloud for dread of disturbing Margaret's memory only too effectively. He turned instinctively to the stairs and climbed them with eyes fixed eagerly ahead; for where would he find his friend more surely than in the bedroom where all their confidences had been? He reached

the door and threw it open; the picture which Patrick Mundy had watched only an hour previously saluted his eyes in all its beauty, the broad spaces of the orchard growing russet in the sun, and Old St. Julian's asleep in its abundance; but Patrick was not there.

A wave of nausea went through his mind, as if the world had plunged backward about its axis. Never, from the moment when he had first entered it, had there been such a silence in Providence Cottage. Sometimes, in the days of his haunting, he had longed and prayed for a stillness like this, for such a loneliness to shut out from him all the dead who had loved and hated and pitied themselves in that house. Now it settled upon him like a strangling cloud, and he felt his blood still in his veins for dread of it.

He cried, from a throat dry and constricted: "Patrick, where are you? Patrick!" But his own voice only ruffled the monstrous calm, and there was neither echo nor reply. After the weariness of release from strain, strain took him again more terribly, stretching him upon a rack of his own senses, as if sight, and touch, and hearing, had become naked, attentuated nerves groping into the corners of the silence.

"Forgive me, Patrick! I didn't mean it, not one word of it. Only, you understand, *she* must not be hurt. Patrick, where are you? Can't you hear me? Don't you understand what I'm saying to you? This isn't stupid self-sacrifice. I want you, my brother——"

The plea died in his throat, and he stood breathing shallow and painfully. Providence Cottage kept its unrelenting sleep. In this bedroom, where his hopes had gathered in one last stand, the air held not even a clear memory of his friend, not even a ghost of the ghost who had shared his wakeful bed only a few brief nights ago.

The broken desk-top, half its inlay chipped away, hung at a drunken angle above the drawer where the relics of Damaris Belgaine were buried. He thought: "It is all over, all over——" and his heart was broken. He put out his hands blindly for the sleeve he knew he would not find.

"Patrick, you can't leave me like this. Wherever you are, speak to me, say I haven't driven you away——"

It was useless, and he knew it. The cool air, the soar of the sky outside the window, the standing books, and the broken desk, and the lofty canopy of the bed received his voice without a tremor of understanding. The silence hung like a dead weight on him, and he could no longer bear it alone. The room was too empty of the soul which had filled it for him to the exclusion of all other thoughts. He turned and ran from it, stumbling blindly down the stairs with his hands to his face, his mind an empty ache; but at the foot he paused for a moment, and his eyes could not choose but catch the glimmer of white which shone in the pile of the black fur mat. He stooped and picked up Margaret's ring. It lay placidly in his hand, little of weight and less of value, only a very tiny thing of material pearls, without lustre, while he had dreamed of marrying Margaret with a ring of the pearls of God.

He went back to her, where she sat smiling softly at the dazzle of the lilac shadows; and before she could speak to him, without a word, without a sound, flung himself at her feet, and with arms folded round her waist, and face ground into her lap, began to weep desolately.

Margaret, starting and quivering, whispered: "Julian, my dear, my dear——" but he was beyond the reach of her voice. The tone of her solicitude now had lost all its insecurity, all its intense personal disquiet; it was sweet

only with a bland maternal tenderness, as if she knew well how to cherish an injury she need never comprehend. She said: "My dear, my dear!" serenely, as the Adam Virgin might have said it. But he knew only that her hands were comforting on the nape of his neck; and that his agony seemed to end in the moment when she took his head between them and lifted it into her breast.

XXX

A DOOR OPENS

PATRICK MUNDY stood beside the open window and looked out upon Old St. Julian's for the last time.

In full daylight there was some sense of perspective in even that startling view; in complete darkness there would have been at least a uniform obscurity about it; but in this twilight it was all deception, every detail of it leaning to his hand, every line as distant as the sky. The moon was already come and gone. There was nothing to make a single shadow between all those bulks of wall and tree, nothing to catch edges of stone or undulating leaves with any point of light. It was all half-tones, two-dimensional, impossible of access to humanity, a faeryland as forlorn as was ever imagined by man at his maddest. Even in his own lost world, inhabited only by himself, a shadow, there could be no grove more desolate than this orchard; no temple more forsaken than this shattered husk of a church standing thin and unsubstantial as so much torn cardboard against the sky; no garden more appalling in its lush riches than this churchyard where his body was buried. Not green now were those trees, nor green the grass under them, but of a negative grey as dull as the wings of flies, and barely opaque to

the sight. They stirred slowly, with a thin sound, in the little wind which moved in the night. There was no beauty in them.

He had granted himself this one night of respite, but there was little left of it now. He turned the pages of his own book upon his hand, and threaded through his mind the words he could not see; but there was little among them which seemed able to stir his heart now. The truest poem he had ever made was unwritten, and not yet a day old.

*I would extol Thee to the highest heights,
Deep as the depths, telling Thy praise, would go;
I would set words to every river's flow,
And fill with starry psalmody the nights——*

There were no stars now, the sky was too pallid to show them; but he had seen nights full of the praise of God, and rivers whose rushing music lacked only words to sing a rhapsody such as the prophets sang, foreseeing the triumph of heaven.

*Whom now in impotence I must adore.
Stilly, within this secret room, my soul:*

Well, he had adored; he adored still; silently and impotently, perhaps; but through the sorrows and pains he had taken upon himself without benefit to any, and through this last and deepest sorrow, this last and most grievous pain which he took upon himself for Julian's sake, incessantly and indomitably he worshipped God. He clung to that thought now as one offering his only virtue to notice, not for redemption, but only for memory.

He waited, standing there with his hands upon the

open book. The light enlarged, and with it the room, expanding with almost imperceptible slowness, becoming limpid, putting off its grey for a white as solid as heavy silk. But still there was no colour in the world, only a hundred gradations of shade from that hard whiteness to the velvet black within the canopy of the bed. Outside the window there began to be shadows; and the trees, and the ruined walls, and the distant roofs beyond, put on a third dimension, grew towards him and away from him until each was in its fixed station. Julian sighed, and gasped, and shuddered, as if the mischance of a dream had troubled his sleep; and in an instant was quiet again.

Patrick Mundy closed his book. It was finished; he had nothing to add now. He went softly to Julian's bedside and stooped to look at his face for the last time, stooped close above him, for under the deep canopy it was still dim. Only a foot of cool air separated their lips; he could feel Julian's breath upon his face, slow and deep and easy, beyond the strata of dreams now. He rested his eyes for a long time in that tranquillity which he had given out of his love; and in the lashes flat upon the cheeks, in the unruffled brow and very quiet lids purple in shadow, he seemed to be reading Julian's future as surely as he read his own.

It was the truth; he had no right in their lives; forth of their lives he must go, now while the will was hot in him, and the way was open. As for Julian: there would be for a while a sort of remembering grief for him, much pain of wondering what the end had really been, and yet more apprehension that the affair was not yet ended; shame in the fear, perhaps, but fear still in the shame; and after a while the edge of his loss would be blunted against the world of his gain, and the grief would be no longer remembering, but only remembered, like the sadnesses of

childhood. In time that phase also would pass, and he would be able to handle the journal of Damaris, and the poems, and the scarf, with no conviction in him but that he had dreamed a story round them, and no emotion deeper than the gentle pity he would give to a character in a play. What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba? Julian would love Margaret, and labour like Hercules upon his ideal world. He would even, in time, burn the poems and the journal, and throw the rotting scarf away. He would wonder where on earth the thing had come from; and thank God, there would be no one to tell him. And he would die a free man, and God would be so much the richer.

The air within the room, which all night long had not been darker than the purple of withering iris petals, was now a neutral blue, in which outlines were lost like the edges of distances, so that near and far were one, and Julian's face might have been Gabriel's face lying upon his spread hands along the barriers of Paradise. He slept, not like a child now, but like a tired man whose mind was at rest, a sleep which was confession and absolution, which would make the coming morn and every morn to come a birth into a new world. Patrick felt the inspiration of peace in every breath which passed the parted lips, the expulsion of cares and griefs in every sigh which answered. He lay sprawled upon his back, head lolling upon the right cheek, arms flung carelessly outward, as artists have painted men murdered in their sleep; and there was a completeness not unlike death in this sleep of peace beyond understanding; as if it were possible to die every night, and every morning to rise from the dead.

The unsleeping and undying spirit watched, and once for all was glad that Julian should be at rest. If there is

a happiness of sacrifice, Patrick Mundy had it then; it was in the steadfast resolution of his mind, and the fondness which came about his soul as he looked, and the ease with which he continually put from him the temptation to lay his hand upon Julian's shoulder, and shake him into wakefulness. But that longing was not so intense now, and resistance had strengthened with triumph; only behind the hollow eyes the devouring pain raged on and on.

"Even now," he thought, exulting, "I have only to reach out my hand and touch him, and he will start up and stare at me, and cry: Patrick! And his voice will be glad, glad that I have come back, glad that we are brothers still, glad to barter Margaret Godber and the whole world to give me ease. But I shall not touch him; and that is most wonderful of all, and I should give God most praise for it."

The dead whiteness behind him had changed to the amber of light wine, and the first ray shot wavering over the summit of Old St. Julian's, like a magical gesture of a wizard's hand, and a shower of colour broke over the orchard upon the rippling leaves. It was time for him to go.

"I have done what could not be done; I have delivered my brother," thought Patrick Mundy, storing, in a memory which already knew them in perfection, and for ever, the lines of the sleeping face. There had been a time when the sleeper would have stirred, and struggled to wakefulness, under that near and intense regard; but now there was no will in it to disturb him, and his sleep remained deep and easy, even when the transparent hand hovered over his head, and the fingers brushed his hair; even when the outspread arm, starting away from him too impetuously, set the nearer book-end jarring out of

place, and the first book fell upon its side with a brief, dull sound, and half a dozen others slurred downward slowly over it. The peace remained upon him as the light deepened, and Patrick Mundy withdrew himself from the bed.

He did not know where he was going. The only clear thought he had was that he must leave the house now, before the day broke. He crossed the room and passed through the door without a backward glance, as steadily as a somnambulist. The staircase was in darkness beneath him; but gazing down as he descended, he saw that the sun had reached the iris flowers, so that they bloomed gloriously upon their grey stems, and their shadows of light, lances pennoned with royal purple, crossed the hall in a sixfold dazzling assault, and quivered in six glowing wounds in the panelling opposite. Five of these were in the staircase below, and as yet out of his sight; but he saw the daze of their colour standing upon the air like so many witch-balls. The sixth hung upon the door which gave into the garden, and the shaking of leaves beyond the glass gave it a motion like water miraculously troubled. He came to the midway window, and looked, and westward the sky was merely an unlovely yellowish grey, but already there were birds astir, not singing, but chattering in a cataract of excited discords. One would have thought there had never been a dawn before. He said to himself, lingering where Damaris had stood: "It is going to be a beautiful day."

He descended the final turn of the staircase more slowly, reluctant to reach the deed in spite of all his resolution in thought. He passed through the single lance of light at the foot and crossed the room; and at the last sacrificial moment when his hand was rising towards the latch, he stopped, and stepped backward in amazement.

For the door, by no agency that he could see, had begun to open.

It had happened as his fingers hovered. The latch had lifted; and though he knew that the door was locked and bolted, a line of gold ran like lightning down the edge of it, and grew broader and bolder before his wondering eyes, and a gush of air sweeter than nectar and cooler than spring water burst inward upon the dark room, and filled it from end to end.

Then he saw, floating light as blown thistle down at the edge of the opening door, a flounce of blue tulle, and above it a second, and a third, the hem of a wide skirt, impalpable as gossamer, but clear as the petals of a flower. The trailing ribbons of a broad-brimmed straw hat lay spread upon the drifting blue, and a hand held one edge of the brim, a small and delicate hand, tapering from smooth knuckles to pointed finger-tips, ringless, without adornment but in its own outlines. He raised his eyes reverently along the curve of wrist and forearm, and saw the wide bell of a lacy sleeve in which they vanished, a fichu swathed round the slender shoulders and swelling over round breasts, knots of ribbon climbing one above another from waist to bosom, a long throat rearing smooth, a small head which leaned back upon it, inclined from chin to brow, a short mouth indescribably on the brink of smiling, a double span of brow magnificently severing the face above eyes hooded in lids like hyacinth flowers; and hair black almost to blueness, and smooth as lacquer, folded down in two great swathes over her cheeks and ears, and coiled upon her neck in shining sheaves. He fixed his eyes upon her face and could not withdraw them; but he made no movement and he said no word as Damaris came in.

She was not changed to his seeing, or changed only

to the first youth and beauty in which he had beheld her, even to her gown, like a dropped harebell, and the austere arrangement of her hair, and the hat she carried in her hand. Nothing of her had changed but to become more glorious; only it seemed to him that she was impermanent as a dream, for the light shone through her as she stepped over the threshold, so that she was herself a thing of no flesh but radiance, of no blood but the ichor of Paradise. But there was breath in her, or the semblance of it, for he saw her breasts surge gently as she came, and the shadows alternately fading and glowing in the hollow between them, that alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious.

He thought: "I have dreamed her. Presently she will go away and let me alone." But his soul trembled before her; and when she did not go away, but came nearer to him with soft, light steps, shining between the shadowy walls, he could not even put out his arms to touch her unreality, nor utter her name, for fear the very sound should shake her atoms of a dream dissolving into the air from which his longing had drawn them. He stood waiting, for what he dared not think, until she drew near and took him by the hand. He closed his eyes, for in that instant she would fade; but when he opened them again she was smiling in great joy, and her hand in his was warm and firm.

Again he thought: "This is her mercy. When I have passed through Charleworth she will leave me; she cannot stay long." But he followed her patiently when she led him to the door, and could not even reason any longer for the weight of wonder upon his heart. He saw through the open doorway only a field of light soaring limpid and kind from the dawning earth, and the colour of it was like neither gold, nor silver, nor pearl, nor any

A DOOR OPENS

jewel of which he had knowledge; and a th
advanced upon it hand in hand, with th f larks
rounding high in heaven, a rhapsody o g. He
thought:

"I never saw Charleworth look like this before. It is true. There was never such a morning, never from the foundation of the world."

Damaris passed over the threshold and drew him after her to the step of the porch; and there she stopped, and looked back at him with a smile of triumph; and though he did not turn his head, he felt the porch, and the house, and the world, fall to dust behind him. But he, looking forward fixedly with eyes of joy, knew only that the day was fully come, and that Damaris led him by the hand, not into Charleworth, but Another City.

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